THE SERMONS OF Mr. YORICK.

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SERMON I.

The Character of

SHIMEI.

SERMON I.

2 SAMUEL xix. 21. 1ſt Part.

But Abiſhai ſaid, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this?——

——IT has not a good aſpect——This is the ſecond time Abiſhai has propoſed Shimei's deſtruction; once in the 16th chapter, on a ſudden tranſport of indignation, when Shimei curſed David, —"*Why ſhould this* "*dead dog, cried* Abiſhai, *curſe my lord the* "*king; let me go over, I pray thee, and cut off* "*his head.*"— This had ſomething at leaſt of gallantry in it; for in doing it he hazarded his own; and beſides the offender was not otherwiſe to be come at: the ſecond time, is in the text; when the offender was abſolutely in their power——when the blood was cool; and the ſuppliant was holding up his hands for mercy.

—Shall not Shimei, anſwered Abiſhai, be put to death for this? So unrelenting a purſuit looks leſs like juſtice than revenge, which is ſo cowardly a paſſion, that it renders Abiſhai's

firſt inſtance almoſt inconſiſtent with the ſecond. I ſhall not endeavour to reconcile them; but confine the diſcourſe ſimply to Shimei; and make ſuch reflections upon his character as may be of uſe to ſociety.

Upon the news of his ſon Abſalom's conſpiracy, David had fled from Jeruſalem, and from his own houſe for ſafety: the repreſentation given of the manner of it, is truly affecting:——never was a ſcene of ſorrow ſo full of diſtreſs!

The king fled with all his houſhold to ſave himſelf from the ſword of the man he loved: he fled with all the marks of humble ſorrow—"*with his head covered, and bareſoot;*" and as he went by the aſcent of mount Olivet, the ſacred hiſtorian ſays he wept—ſome gladſome ſcenes, perhaps, which there had paſſed——ſome hours of feſtivity he had ſhared with Abſalom in better days, preſſed tenderly upon nature,——he wept at this ſad viciſſitude of things:—and all the people that were with him, ſmitten with his affliction, *covered each* man *his head—weeping as he went* up.

It was on this occaſion, when David had got

to Bahurim, that Shimei the ſon of Gera, as we read in the 5th verſe, came out:—was it with the choiceſt oils he could gather from mount Olivet, to pour into his wounds?—— Times and troubles had not done enough; and thou cameſt out, Shimei, to add thy portion—

" *And as he came, he curſed David, and threw ſtones and caſt duſt at him; and thus ſaid Shimei, when he curſed: Go to, thou man of Beliel—thou haſt ſought blood,—and behold thou* art *caught in thy own miſchief*; for now hath the *Lord returned* upon thee all the blood *of Saul and his houſe.*

There is no ſmall degree of malicious craft in fixing upon a ſeaſon to give a mark of enmity and ill will: a word,—a look, which at one time would make no impreſſion—at another time wounds the heart; and like a ſhaft flying with the wind, pierces deep, which, with its own natural force, would ſcarce have reached the object aimed at.

This ſeemed to have been Shimei's hopes: but excels of malice makes men too quickſighted even for their own purpoſe. Could Shimei poſſibly have waited for the ebb of David's paſ-

ſions, and till the firſt great conflict within him had been over—then the reproach of being guilty of Saul's blood muſt have hurt him—his heart was poſſeſſed with other feelings—it bled for the deadly ſting which Abſalom had given him—he felt not the indignity of a ſtranger—*Behold, my ſon Abſalom, who came out of my bowels, ſeeketh my life—how much more may Shimei do it?—let him alone; it may be the Lord may look upon my affliction, and requite me good for this evil.*"

An injury unanſwered in courſe grows weary of itſelf, and dies away in a voluntary remorſe.

In bad diſpoſitions capable of no reſtraint but fear——it has a different effect——the ſilent digeſtion of one wrong provokes a ſecond.——He purſues him with the ſame invective; *and as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's ſide over againſt him; and curſed as he went, and caſt duſt at him.*

The inſolence of baſe minds in ſucceſs is boundleſs; and would ſcarce admit of a compariſon, did not they themſelves furniſh us with one in the degrees of their abjection when evil returns upon them—the ſame poor heart which

excites ungenerous tempers to triumph over a fallen adverſary; in ſome inſtances ſeems to exalt them above the point of courage, ſinks them in others even below cowardice.—— Not unlike ſome little particles of matter ſtruck off from the ſurface of the dirt by ſun-ſhine—— dance and ſport there whilſt it laſts—but the moment it is withdrawn—they fall down—for duſt they are—and unto duſt they will return ——whilſt firmer and larger bodies preſerve the ſtations which nature has aſſigned them, ſubjected to laws which no change of weather can alter.

This laſt, did not ſeem to be Shimei's caſe; in all David's proſperity, there is no mention made of him—he thruſt himſelf forward into the circle, and poſſibly was numbered amongſt friends and well-wiſhers.

When the ſcene changes, and David's troubles force him to leave his houſe in deſpair—Shimei is the firſt man we hear of, who comes out againſt him.

The wheel turns round once more; Abſalom is caſt down and David returns in peace—Shimei ſuits his behaviour to the occaſion, and is

the firſt man alſo who haſtes to greet him—— and had the wheel turned round a hundred times, Shimei, I dare ſay, in every period of its rotation, would have been uppermoſt.

O Shimei! would to heaven when thou waſt ſlain, that all thy family had been ſlain with thee; and not one of thy reſemblance left! but ye have multiplied exceedingly and repleniſhed the earth; and if I propheſy rightly——Ye will in the end *ſubdue* it.

There is not a character in the world which has ſo bad an influence upon the affairs of it, as this of Shimei: whilſt power meets with honeſt checks, and the evils of life with honeſt refuge, the world will never be undone; but thou, Shimei, haſt ſapp'd it at both extremes; for thou corrupteſt proſperity—and it is thou who haſt broken the heart of poverty: and ſo long as worthleſs ſpirits can be ambitious ones, it is a character we ſhall never want. O! it infeſts the court——the camp——the cabinet——it infeſts the church——go where you will—— in every quarter, in every profeſſion, you ſee a Shimei following the wheels of the fortunate through thick mire and clay.--

—Haſte, Shimei!—haſte; or thou wilt be undone for ever——Shimei girded up his loins and ſpeeded after him—behold the hand which governs every thing,——takes the wheels from off his chariot, ſo that he who driveth, driveth on heavily—Shimei doubles his ſpeed—but it is the contrary way; he flies like the wind over a ſandy deſart, and the place thereof ſhall know it no more—— ſtay, Shimei! it is your patron —your friend—your benefactor;—it is the man who has raiſed you from the dunghil—it is all one to Shimei: Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune; marks the riſe and fall of it, and with all the variations from ſcorching hot to freezing cold upon his countenance, that the ſmile will admit of.——Is a cloud upon thy affairs?—ſee—it hangs over Shimei's brow —haſt *thou been* ſpoken for to the king or the captain of the hoſt without ſucceſs?—look not into the court-kalendar——the vacancy is filled up in Shimei's face—art thou in debt?—ough not to Shimei—no matter—the worſt officer of the law ſhall not be more inſolent.

What then, Shimei, is the guilt of poverty ſo black—is it of ſo general a concern, that

thou and all thy family muſt riſe up as one man to reproach it?——when it loſt every thing—did it loſe the right to pity too? or did he who maketh poor as well as maketh rich, ſtrip it of its natural powers to mollify the hearts and ſupple the temper of your race?—Truſt me, ye have much to anſwer for; it is this treatment which it has ever met with from ſpirits like yours, which has gradually taught the world to look upon it as the greateſt of evils and ſhun it as the worſt diſgrace——and what is it, I beſeech you——what is it that man will not do, to keep clear of ſo ſore an imputation and puniſhment?—is it not, to flie from this, that *he riſes early—late takes reſt; and eats the bread of careſulneſs?*——that he plots, contrives—ſwears—lies—ſhuffles—puts on all ſhapes—tries all garments,——wears them, with this, or that ſide outward—juſt as it favours his eſcape.

They, who have conſidered our nature, affirm, that ſhame and diſgrace are two of the moſt inſupportable evils of human life: the courage and ſpirits of many have maſtered other misfortunes and borne themſelves up againſt them; but the wiſeſt and beſt of ſouls have not

been a match for theſe; and we have many a tragical inſtance on record, what greater evils have been run into, merely to avoid this one.

Without this tax of infamy, poverty, with all the burdens it lays upon our fleſh—ſo long as it is virtuous, could never break the ſpirits of a man; all its hunger and pain and nakedneſs are nothing to it: they have ſome counterpoiſe of good; and beſides they are directed by providence, and muſt be ſubmitted to: but thoſe are afflictions not from the hand of GOD or nature—"*for they do come forth of the* DUST, and moſt properly may be ſaid *to ſpring out of the* GROUND, and this is the reaſon they lay ſuch ſtreſs upon our patience,—and in the end, create ſuch a diſtruſt of the world, as makes us look up—and pray, *Let me fall into thy hands, O God! but let me not fall into the hands of men.*"

Agreeable to this was the advice of Eliphas to Job in the day of his diſtreſs;——"*acquaint thyſelf*, ſaid he, NOW *with God:*"—indeed his poverty ſeemed to have left him no other: the ſwords of the Sabeans had frightened them away—all but a few friends; and of what kind

they were, the very proverb, of Job's *comforters*—ſays enough.

It is an inſtance which gives one great concern for human nature, "That a man, *who always wept* for him who was in *trouble;*——*who never ſaw any periſh for want of cloathing;*—*who never ſuffered the ſtranger to lodge in the ſtreet, but opened his door to the traveller;*——*that a man* of ſo good a character,—"*that he never cauſed the eyes of the widow to fail,—or had eaten his morſel by himſelf alone, and the fatherleſs had not eaten thereof;* that ſuch a man, the moment he fell into poverty, ſhould have occaſion to cry out for quarter,—*Have mercy upon me, O my friends! for the hand of God has touched me.*—— Gentleneſs and humanity (one would think) would melt the hardeſt heart and charm the fierceſt ſpirit; bind up the moſt violent hand, and ſtill the moſt abuſive tongue:—but the experiment failed in a ſtronger inſtance of him, whoſe meat and drink it was to do us good; and in purſuit of which, whoſe whole life was a continued ſcene of kindneſs and of inſults, for which we muſt go back to

the ſame explanation with which we ſet out,—and that is, the ſcandal of poverty.———

"*This fellow we know not whence he is*"—was the popular cry of one part; and with thoſe who ſeemed to know better, the quere, did not leſſen the diſgrace:—Is not this the carpenter, the ſon of Mary?—of Mary!—great GOD of Iſrael! What!—of the meaneſt of thy people! (*for he had not regarded the low eſtate* of his hand-maiden)—and of the pooreſt too! (for ſhe had not a lamb to offer, but was purified as Moſes directed in ſuch a caſe, by the oblation of a turtle dove.)——

That the SAVIOUR of their nation, could be poor, and not have where to lay his head,——was a crime never to be forgiven; and though the purity of his doctrine, and the works which he had done in its ſupport, were ſtronger arguments on its ſide, than his humiliation could be againſt it,—yet the offence ſtill remained;—they looked for the redemption of Iſrael; but they would have it only in thoſe dreams of power which filled their imagination.——

Ye who weigh the worth of all things only

in the gold-ſmith's balance!—was this religion for you—a religion whoſe appearance was not great and ſplendid,—but looked thin and meagre, and whoſe principles and promiſes ſhewed more like the curſes of the law, than its bleſſings:—for they called for ſufferings and promiſed little but perſecutions.

In truth it is not eaſy for tribulation or diſtreſs, for nakedneſs or famine, to make many converts out of pride; or reconcile a worldly heart to the ſcorn and reproaches, which were ſure to be the portion of every one who believed a myſtery ſo diſcredited by the world, and ſo unpalatable to all its paſſions and pleaſures.

But to bring this ſermon to its proper concluſion.

If Aſtrea or Juſtice never finally took her leave of the world, till the day that poverty firſt became ridiculous, it is matter of conſolation, that the GOD of Juſtice is ever over us;—that whatever outrages the lowneſs of our condition may be expoſed to, from a mean and undiſcerning world,—that we walk in the preſence of the greateſt and moſt generous of Beings, who is infinitely removed from cruelty

and ſtraitneſs of mind, and all thoſe little and illiberal paſſions, with which we hourly inſult each other.

The worſt part of mankind are not always to be conquered—but if they are—it is by the imitation of theſe qualities which muſt do it:—it is true—as I have ſhewn—they may fail; but ſtill all is not loſt,—for if we conquer not the world,—in the very attempts to do it, we ſhall at leaſt conquer ourſelves, and lay the foundation of our peace (where it ought to be) within our own hearts.

SERMON II.

The Caſe of HEZEKIAH and the Meſſengers.

Preached before his Excellency the Earl of HERTFORD.

At Paris, 1763.

SERMON II.

2 KINGS XX. 15.

And he ſaid, What have they ſeen in thine houſe? and Hezekiah anſwered, All the things that are in my houſe have they ſeen; there is nothing amongſt all my treaſures that I have not ſhewn them.

——AND where was the harm, you will ſay in this?

An eaſtern prince, the ſon of Baladine, had ſent meſſengers with preſents as far as from Babylon, to congratulate Hezekiah upon the recovery from his ſickneſs; and Hezekiah, who was a good prince, acted conſiſtently with himſelf; *he received and entertained the men and hearkened unto them*, and before he ſent them all away, he courteouſly ſhewed them all that was worth a ſtranger's curioſity in his houſe and in his kingdom,——and in this, ſeemed only to have diſcharged himſelf of what urbanity or

the *ettiquete* of courts might require. Notwithſtanding this, in the verſe which immediately follows the text, we find he had done amiſs; and as a puniſhment for it, that all his riches, which his forefathers had laid up in ſtore unto that day, were threatened to be carried away in triumph to Babylon,———the very place from whence the meſſengers had come.

A hard return! and what his behaviour does not ſeem to have deſerved. To ſet this matter in a clear light, it will be neceſſary to enlarge upon the whole ſtory,——the reflections which will ariſe out of it, as we go along, may help us———at leaſt, I hope they will be of uſe on their own account.

After the miraculous defeat of the Aſſyrians, we read in the beginning of this chapter, that Hezekiah was ſick even unto death; and that GOD ſends the prophet Iſaiah, with the unwelcome meſſage, *That he ſhould ſet his houſe in order, for that he ſhould die and not live.*

There are many inſtances of men, who have received ſuch news with the greateſt eaſe of mind, and even entertained the thoughts of it with ſmiles upon their countenances,—and this,

either from ſtrength of ſpirits and the natural chearfulneſs of their temper,—or that, they knew the world,—and cared not for it,—or expected a better:——yet thouſands of good men with all the helps of philoſophy, and againſt all the aſſurances of a well ſpent life, that the change muſt be to their account,—upon the approach of death have ſtill leaned towards this world, and wanted ſpirits and reſolution to bear the ſhock of a ſeparation from it for ever.

This in ſome meaſure ſeemed to have been Hezekiah's caſe; for though he had walked before GOD in truth, and with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in his ſight, ——yet we find that the haſty ſummons afflicted him greatly;—that upon the delivery of the meſſage he wept ſore;——that he turned his face towards the wall,——perhaps for the greater ſecrecy of his devotion, and that, by withdrawing himſelf thus from all external objects, he might offer up his prayer unto his GOD, with greater and more fervent attention.

——And he prayed, and ſaid, O LORD! I beſeech thee remember —— O Hezekiah! How

couldſt thou fear that God had forgotten thee? or, How couldſt thou doubt of his remembrance of thy integrity, when he called thee to receive its recompence?

But here it appears of what materials man is made: he purſues happineſs——and yet is ſo content with miſery, that he would wander for ever in this dark vale of it,——and ſay, "*It is good, Lord! to be here, and to build ta-*"*bernacles of reſt:*" and ſo long as we are "clothed with fleſh, and nature has ſo great a ſhare within us, it is no wonder if that part claims it's right, and pleads for the ſweetneſs of life, notwithſtanding all its care and diſappointments.

This natural weakneſs, no doubt, had its weight in Hezekiah's earneſt prayer for life: and yet from the ſucceſs it met with, and the immediate change of GOD's purpoſe thereupon, it is hard to imagine, but that it muſt have been accompanied with ſome meritorious and more generous motive; and if we ſuppoſe, as ſome have done, that he turned his face towards the wall, becauſe that part of his chamber looked towards the temple, the care of whoſe

preſervation lay next his heart, we may conſiſtently enough give this ſenſe to his prayer.

"O God! remember how I have walked be-
" fore thee in truth;——how much I have
" done to reſcue thy religion from error and
" falſhood;——thou knoweſt that the eyes of
" the world are fixed upon me, as one that hath
" forſaken their idolatry, and reſtored thy wor-
" ſhip;—that I ſtand in the midſt of a crooked
" and corrupt generation, which looks through
" all my actions, and watches all events which
" happen to me: if now they ſhall ſee me
" ſnatched away in the midſt of my days and
" ſervice, how will thy great name ſuffer in
" my extinction? Will not the heathen ſay,
" This it is, to ſerve the GOD of Iſrael!——
" How faithfully did Hezekiah walk before
" him?—what enemies did he bring upon
" himſelf, in too warmly promoting his wor-
" ſhip? and now when the hour of ſickneſs
" and diſtreſs came upon him, and he moſt
" wanted the aid of his GOD—behold how
" he was forſaken!"

It is not unreaſonable, to aſcribe ſome ſuch pious and more diſintereſted motive to Heze-

kiah's deſire of life, from the iſſue and ſucceſs of his prayer:——*for it came to paſs before Iſaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, ſaying, Turn again and tell Hezekiah I have heard his prayer, I have ſeen his tears, and behold I will heal him.*

It was upon this occaſion, as we read in the 12th verſe of this chapter, that Baradoc-Baladan, ſon of Baladin king of Babylon, ſent letters and a preſent unto Hezekiah: he had heard the fame of his ſickneſs and recovery: for as the Chaldeans were great ſearchers into the ſecrets of nature, eſpecially into the motions of the celeſtial bodies, in all probability they had taken notice at that diſtance, of the ſtrange appearance of the ſhadow's returning ten degrees backwards upon their dials, and had enquired and learned upon what account, and in whoſe favour ſuch a ſign was given: ſo that this aſtronomical miracle, beſides the political motive which it would ſuggeſt of courting ſuch a favourite of heaven, had been ſufficient by itſelf to have led a curious people as far as Je-

ruſalem, that they might ſee the man for whoſe ſake the ſun had forſook his courſe.

And here we ſee how hard it is to ſtand the ſhock of proſperity,——and how much truer a proof we give of our ſtrength in that extreme of life, than in the other.

In all the trials of adverſity, we find that Hezekiah behaved well,——nothing unmaned him: when beſieged by the Aſſyrian hoſt, which ſhut him up in Jeruſalem, and threatened his deſtruction,—he ſtood unſhaken and depended upon GOD's ſuccour:——when caſt down upon his bed of ſickneſs, and threatened with death, he meekly turned his face towards the wall,——wept and prayed, and depended upon GOD's mercy: but no ſooner does proſperity return upon him, and the meſſengers from a far country come to pay the flattering homage due to his greatneſs, and the extraordinary felicity of his life, but he turns giddy, and ſinks under the weight of his good fortune, and with a tranſport unbecoming a wiſe man upon it,—it is ſaid, he hearkened unto the men, and ſhewed them all the houſe of his precious things, the ſilver and the gold, the ſpices

and the precious ointments, and all the houſe of his armour, and all that was found in his treaſures; that there was nothing in his houſe, nor in his dominions, that Hezekiah ſhewed them not: for though it is not expreſsly ſaid here, (though it is in the parallel paſſage in Chronicles)—nor is he charged by the prophet that he did this out of vanity and a weak tranſport of oſtentation;——yet as we are ſure, God could not be offended but where there was a real crime, we might reaſonably conclude that this was his, and that he, who ſearches into the heart of man, beheld that his was corrupted with the bleſſings he had given him; and that it was juſt to make what was the occaſion of his pride, become the inſtrument of his puniſhment, by decreeing, that all the riches he had laid up in ſtore until that day, ſhould be carried away in triumph to Babylon, the very place from whence the meſſengers had come who had been eye-witneſſes of his folly.

" O Hezekiah! How couldſt thou provoke
" God to bring this judgment upon thee?
" How could thy ſpirit, all-meek and gentle
" as it was, have ever fallen into this ſnare?

" Were they treaſures rich as the earth—
" What! was thy heart ſo vain as to be lift-
" ed up therewith? Was not all that was va-
" luable in the world nay, was not heaven
" itſelf almoſt at thy command whilſt thou waſt
" humble? and, How was it, that thou couldſt
" barter away all this, for what was lighter
" than a bubble, and defecrate an action ſo
" full of courteſy and kindneſs as thine appear-
" ed to be, by ſuffering it to take its riſe from
" ſo polluted a fountain?"

There is ſcarce any thing which the heart more unwillingly bears, than an analyſis of this kind.

We are a ſtrange compound; and ſomething foreign, from what charity would ſuſpect, ſo eternally twiſts itſelf into what we do, that not only in momentous concerns, where intereſt liſts under it all the power of diſguiſe,—but even in the moſt indifferent of our actions,—not worth a fallacy——by force of habit, we continue it: ſo that whatever a man is about,——obſerve him,——he ſtands arm'd inſide and out with two motives; an oſtenſible one for the world,——and another which he re-

ſerves for his own private uſe;—this, you may ſay, the world has no concern with: it might have been ſo; but by obtruding the wrong motive upon the world, and ſtealing from it a character, inſtead of winning one;——we give it a right, and a temptation along with it, to enquire into the affair.

The motives of the one for doing it, are often little better than the others for deſerving it. Let us ſee if ſome ſocial virtue may be extracted from the errors of both the one and the other.

VANITY bids all her ſons to be generous and brave,——and her daughters to be chaſte and courteous.——But why do we want her inſtructions?——Aſk the comedian who is taught a part he feels not——

Is it that the principles of religion want ſtrength, or that the real paſſion for what is good and worthy will not carry us high enough?——God! thou knoweſt they carry us too high——we want not *to be*—but *to ſeem*—

Look out of your door,—take notice of that man: ſee what diſquieting, intriguing and ſhifting, he is content to go through, merely

to be thought a man of plain dealing:——three grains of honeſty would ſave him all this trouble:——alas! he has them not.——

Behold a ſecond under a ſhew of piety hiding the impurities of a debauched life:——he is juſt entering the houſe of God:——would he was more pure—or leſs pious:—but then he could not gain his point.

Obſerve a third going on almoſt in the ſame tract,———with what an inflexible ſanctity of deportment, he ſuſtains himſelf as he advances:—every line in his face writes abſtinence;—every ſtride looks like a check upon his deſires: ſee, I beſeech you, how he is clok'd up with ſermons, prayers and ſacraments; and ſo bemuffled with the externals of religion, that he has not a hand to ſpare for a worldly purpoſe;—he has armour at leaſt—why does he put it on? is there no ſerving God without all this? muſt the garb of religion be extended ſo wide, to the danger of it's rending?—Yes truly, or it will not hide the ſecret——and, What is that?

———That the ſaint has no religion at all.

——But here comes GENEROSITY; giving

——not to a decayed artiſt—but to the arts and ſciences themſelves.—See,—he *builds not a chamber in the wall apart for the prophet;* but whole ſchools and colleges for thoſe who come after. Lord! how they will magnify his name!—— it is in capitals already; the firſt—the higheſt, in the gilded rent-roll of every hoſpital and aſylum ———

——One honeſt tear ſhed in private over the unfortunate, is worth it all.

What a problematic ſet of creatures does ſimulation make us! Who would divine that all that anxiety and concern ſo viſible in the airs of one half of that great aſſembly ſhould ariſe from nothing elſe, but that the other half of it may think them to be men of conſequence, penetration, parts and conduct?—What a noiſe amongſt the claimants about it? Behold *Humility*, out of mere pride,——and honeſtly almoſt out of knavery:——*Chaſtity*, never once in harm's way,——and courage, like a Spaniſh ſoldier upon an Italian ſtage—a bladder full of wind.—

— Hark! that, the ſound of that trumpet, ——let not my ſoldier run,——it is ſome good

Chriſtian giving alms. O, PITY! thou gentleſt of human paſſions! ſoft and tender are thy notes, and ill accord they with ſo loud an inſtrument.

Thus ſomething jars, and will for ever jar in theſe caſes: impoſture is all diſſonance, let what maſter ſoever of it undertake the part; let him harmonize and modulate it as he may, one tone will contradict another; and whilſt we have ears to hear we ſhall diſtinguiſh it: it is truth only which is conſiſtent and ever in harmony with itſelf: it ſits upon our lips, like the natural notes of ſome melodies, ready to drop out, whether we will or no;—it racks no invention to let ourſelves alone,—and needs fear no critic, to have the ſame excellency in the heart which appears in the action.

It is a pleaſing alluſion the ſcripture makes uſe of in calling us ſometimes a houſe, and ſometimes a temple, according to the more or leſs exalted qualities of the ſpiritual gueſt which is lodged within us: whether this is the preciſe ground of the diſtinction, I will not affirm; but thus much may be ſaid, that, if we are to be temples, it is truth and ſingleneſs of heart

which muſt make the dedication: it is this which muſt firſt diſtinguiſh them from the unhallowed pile, where dirty tricks and impoſitions are practiſed by the hoſt upon the traveller, who tarries but for a moment and returns not again.

We all take notice, how cloſe and reſerved people are; but we do not take notice at the ſame time, that every one may have ſomething to conceal, as well as ourſelves; and that we are only marking the diſtances and taking the meaſures of ſelf-defence from each other, in the very inſtances we complain of: this is ſo true, that there is ſcarce any character ſo rare, as a man of a real open and generous integrity, ——who carries his heart in his hand,——who ſays the thing he thinks; and does the thing he pretends. Though no one can diſlike the character,——yet Diſcretion generally ſhakes her head,—and the world ſoon lets him into the reaſon.

"*O that I had in the wilderneſs a lodging* "*of way-faring men! that I might leave ſuch a* "*people and go from them.*" Where is the man of a nice ſenſe of truth and ſtrong feelings,

from whom the duplicity of the world has not at one time or other wrung the ſame wiſh; and where lies the wilderneſs to which ſome one has not fled, from the ſame melancholy impulſe?

Thus much for thoſe who give occaſion to be thought ill of:—let us ſay a word or two unto thoſe who take it.

But to avoid all common-place cant, as much as I can on this head,——I will forbear to ſay, becauſe I do not think it,—— that it is a breach of Chriſtian charity, to think or ſpeak evil of our neighbour, etc.

——We cannot avoid it: our opinions muſt follow the evidence; and we are perpetually in ſuch engagements and ſituations, that it is our duties to ſpeak what our opinions are—but God forbid, that this ever ſhould be done, but from its beſt motive—the ſenſe of what is due to virtue, governed by diſcretion and the utmoſt fellow-feeling: were we to go on otherwiſe, beginning with the great broad cloak of hypocriſy, and ſo down through all its little trimmings and facings, tearing away without mercy

all that looked ſeemly,---we ſhould leave but a tatter'd world of it.

But I confine what I have to ſay to a character leſs equivocal, and which takes up too much room in the world: it is that of thoſe, who from a general diſtruſt of all that looks diſintereſted, finding nothing to blame in an action, and perhaps much to admire in it,—immediately fall foul upon it's motives: *Does Job ſerve God for nought?* What a vile inſinuation! beſides, the queſtion was not, whether Job was a rich man or a poor man;—but, whether he was a man of integrity or no? and the appearances were ſtrong on his ſide: indeed it might have been otherwiſe; it was poſſible Job might be inſincere, and the devil took the advantage of the die for it.

It is a bad picture, and done by a terrible maſter, and yet we are always copying it. Does a man from real conviction of heart forſake his vices?——the poſition is not to be allowed, ——no; his vices have forſaken him.

Does a pure virgin fear God and ſay her prayers: —— ſhe is in her climacteric.

Does humanity clothe and educate the un-

known orphan? — Poverty! thou haſt no genealogies:——ſee! is he not the father of the child? Thus we do rob heroes of the beſt part of their glory—their virtue. Take away the motive of the act, you take away, all that is worth having in it;—wreſt it to ungenerous ends, you load the virtuous man who did it, with infamy,—undo it all——I beſeech you: give him back his honour,——reſtore the jewel you have taken from him,—replace him in the eye of the world—

——it is too late.

It is painful to utter the reproaches which ſhould come here.——I will truſt them with yourſelves: in coming from that quarter, they will more naturally produce ſuch fruits as will not ſet your teeth on edge——for they will be the fruits of love and good-will, to the praiſe of God and the happineſs of the world, which I wiſh.

SERMON III.

The LEVITE and his CONCUBINE.

SERMON III.

JUDGES xix. 1, 2, 3.

And it came to paſs in thoſe days, when there was no king in Iſrael, that there was a certain Levite ſojourning on the ſide of mount Ephraim, who took unto him a concubine.——

——A CONCUBINE!—but the text accounts for it, *for in thoſe days there was no king in Iſrael*; and the Levite, you will ſay, like every other man in it, did what was right in his own eyes,——and ſo, you may add, did his concubine too—*for ſhe played the whore againſt him, and went away.*——

——Then ſhame and grief go with her, and wherever ſhe ſeeks a ſhelter, may the hand of juſtice ſhut the door againſt her.——

Not ſo; for ſhe went into her father's houſe in Bethlehem-judah, and was with him four whole months ——Bleſſed interval for meditation upon the fickleneſs and vanity of this world and its pleaſures! I ſee the holy man upon his

knees,—with hands compreſſed to his boſom, and with uplifted eyes, thanking heaven, that the object which had ſo long ſhared his affections, was fled——

The text gives a different picture of his ſituation; *for he aroſe and went after her to ſpeak friendly to her, and to bring her back again, having his ſervant with him, and a couple of aſſes; and ſhe brought him into her father's houſe; and when the father of the damſel ſaw him, he rejoiced to meet him.* ——

—— A moſt ſentimental group! you will ſay: and ſo it is, my good commentator, the world talks of every thing: give but the outlines of a ſtory,——let *ſpleen* or *prudery* ſnatch the pencil, and they will finiſh it with ſo many hard ſtrokes, and with ſo dirty a colouring, that *candour* and *courteſy* will ſit in torture as they look at it.—— Gentle and virtuous ſpirits! ye who know not what it is to be rigid interpreters, but of your own failings,——to you I addreſs myſelf, the unhired advocates for the conduct of the miſguided,——whence is it that the world is not more jealous of your office? How often muſt ye repeat it, "That ſuch a

one's doing ſo or ſo,"--is not ſufficient evidence by itſelf to overthrow the accuſed? That our actions ſtand ſurrounded with a thouſand circumſtances which do not preſent themſelves at firſt ſight;—that the firſt ſprings and motives which impelled the unfortunate, lie deeper ſtill; —and, that of the millions which every hour are arraigned, thouſands of them may have erred from the *head*, and been actually outwitted into evil; and even when from the heart, ——that the difficulties and temptations under which they acted,— the force of the paſſions, ——the ſuitableneſs of the object, and the many ſtrungles of virtue before ſhe fell,——may be ſo many appeals from juſtice to the judgment ſeat of pity.

Here then let us ſtop a moment, and give the ſtory of the Levite and his Concubine a ſecond hearing: like all others much of it depends upon the telling; and as the ſcripture has left us no kind of comment upon it, it is a ſtory on which the heart cannot be at a loſs for what to ſay, or the imagination for what to ſuppoſe —the danger is, humanity may ſay too much.

And it came to paſs in thoſe days when there was no king in Iſrael, that a certain Levite ſojourning on the ſide of mount Ephraim, took unto himſelf a Concubine.——

O Abraham, thou father of the faithful! if this was wrong,—why didſt thou ſet ſo enſnaring an example before thy eyes of thy deſcendants? and, why did the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac and Jacob, bleſs ſo often a a ſeed of ſuch intercourſes, and promiſe to multiply and make princes to come out of them?

God can diſpenſe with his own laws; and accordingly we find the holieſt of the patriarchs, and others in ſcripture whoſe hearts cleaved moſt unto God, accommodating themſelves as well as they could to the diſpenſation: that Abraham had Hagar;—that Jacob, beſides his two wives, Rachael and Leah, took alſo unto him Zilpah and Bilhah, from whom many of the tribes deſcended:—that David had ſeven wives and ten concubines;——Rehoboam, ſixty,—and that, in whatever caſes it became reproachable, it ſeemed not ſo much the thing itſelf, as the abuſe of it, which made it ſo: this

was remarkable in that of Solomon, whoſe exceſs became an inſult upon the privileges of mankind; for by the ſame plan of luxury, which made it neceſſary to have forty thouſand ſtalls of horſes,—he had unfortunately miſcalculated his other wants, and ſo had ſeven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines.——Wife—deluded man! was it not that thou madeſt ſome amends for thy bad practice, by thy good preaching, what had become of thee!——three hundred—— but let us turn aſide, I beſeech you, from ſo ſad a ſtumbling block.

The Levite had but one. The Hebrew word imports a woman a concubine, or a wife a concubine, to diſtinguiſh her from the more infamous ſpecies who came under the roofs of the licentious without principle. Our annotators tells us, that in Jewiſh *æconomics*, theſe differed little from the wife, except in ſome outward ceremonies and ſtipulations, but agreed with her in all the true eſſences of marriage, and gave themſelves up to the huſband, (for ſo he is called) with faith plighted, with ſentiments and with affection.

Such a one the Levite wanted to ſhare his ſo-

litude, and fill up that uncomfortable blank in the heart in ſuch a ſituation; for notwithſtanding all that we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handſome things ſaid upon the ſweets of retirement, etc.... Yet ſtill, "*it is not good for man to be* "*alone:* nor can all which the cold-hearted pedant ſtuns our ears with, upon the ſubject, ever give one anſwer of ſatisfaction to the mind; in the midſt of the loudeſt vauntings of philoſophy, nature will have her yearnings for ſociety and friendſhip;——a good heart wants ſomething to be kind to——and the beſt parts of our blood, and the pureſt of our ſpirits, ſuffer moſt under the deſtitution.

Let the torpid Monk ſeek heaven comfortleſs and alone——God ſpeed him! For my part, I fear, I ſhould never ſo find the way: let me be wiſe and religious——but let me be MAN: wherever thy Providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get to thee——give me ſome companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, How our ſhadows lengthen as the ſun goes down:—to whom I may ſay, How freſh is the face of nature! how ſweet the

flowers of the field! how delicious are theſe fruits!

Alas! with bitter herbs, like his paſſover, did the Levite eat them: for as they thus walked the path of life together,—ſhe wantonly turned aſide into another, and fled from him.

It is the mild and quiet half of the world, who are generally outraged and born down by the other half of it: but in this they have the advantage; whatever be the ſenſe of their wrongs, that pride ſtands not ſo watchful a ſentinel over their forgiveneſs, as it does in the breaſts of the fierce and froward: we ſhould all of us, I believe, be more forgiving than we are, would the world but give us leave; but it is apt to interpoſe it's ill offices in remiſſions, eſpecially of this kind: the truth is, it has it's laws, to which the heart is not always a party: and acts ſo like an unfeeling engine in all caſes without diſtinction, that it requires all the firmneſs of the moſt ſettled humanity to bear up againſt it.

Many a bitter conflict would the Levite have to ſuſtain with himſelf—his Concubine—and the ſentiments of his tribe, upon the wrong done

him:——much matter for pleading—and many an embarraſſing account on all ſides: in a period of four whole months, every paſſion would take it's empire by turns; and in the ebbs and flows of the leſs unfriendly ones, PITY would find ſome moments to be heard——RELIGION herſelf would not be ſilent,—CHARITY would have much to ſay,—and thus attun'd, every object he beheld on the borders of mount Ephraim,——every grot and grove he paſſed by, would ſollicit the recollection of former kindneſs, and awaken an advocate in her behalf, more powerful than them all.

"I grant——I grant it all,"—he would cry,—"it is ſoul! it is faithleſs!——but, why is "the door of mercy to be ſhut for ever againſt "it? and, why is it to be the only ſad crime "that the injured may not remit, or reaſon "or imagination paſs over without a ſcar?—— "Is it the blackeſt? In what catalogue of hu- "man offences is it ſo marked? or, is it, that "of all others, it is a blow moſt grievous to "be endured?——the heart cries out, It is ſo: "but let me aſk my own, What paſſions are "they which give edge and force to this wea-

" pon which has ſtruck me? and, Whether it
" is not my own pride, as much as my virtues,
" which at this moment excite the greateſt
" part of that intolerable anguiſh in the wound
" which I am laying to her charge? But mer-
" ciful Heaven! was it otherwiſe, why is an
" unhappy creature of thine to be perſecuted
" by me with ſo much cruel revenge and ran-
" corous deſpite as my firſt tranſport called
" for? have faults no extenuations?——makes
" it nothing, that, when the treſpaſs was com-
" mitted, ſhe forſook the partner of her guilt,
" and fled directly to her father's houſe? And
" is there no difference betwixt one propenſely
" going out of the road and continuing there,
" through deprivity of will——and a hapleſs
" wanderer ſtraying by deluſion, and warily
" treading back her ſteps?——Sweet is the look
" of ſorrow for an offence, in a heart deter-
" mined never to commit it more!——Upon
" that altar only, could I offer up my wrongs.
" Cruel is the puniſhment which an ingenious
" mind will take upon itſelf, from the remorſe
" of ſo hard a treſpaſs againſt me,——and, if
" that will not balance the account,——juſt

" God! let me forgive the reſt. Mercy well " becomes the heart of all thy creatures,—— " but moſt of thy ſervant, a Levite, who offers " up ſo many daily ſacrifices to thee, for the " tranſgreſſions of thy people."———

—" But to little purpoſe, he would add, " have I ſerved at thy altar, where my buſi- " neſs was to ſue for mercy, had I not learned " to practiſe it."

Peace and happineſs reſt upon the head and heart of every man who can thus think!

So he aroſe and went after her for to ſpeak friendly to her—in the original—" to ſpeak to her heart;"——to apply to their former endearments,—and to aſk, How ſhe could be ſo unkind to him, and ſo very unkind to herſelf?

——Even the upbraidings of the quiet and relenting are ſweet: not like the ſtrivings of the fierce and inexorable, who bite and devour all who have thwarted them in their way;—but they are calm and courteous like the ſpirit which watches over their character: how could ſuch a temper woo the damſel and not bring her back? or, how could the father of the

damſel, in ſuch a ſcene, have a heart open to any impreſſions but thoſe mentioned in the text;——— *That when he ſaw him, he rejoiced to meet him;*——urged his ſtay from day to day with that moſt irreſiſtible of all invitations, "*Comfort thy heart, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.*"

If *Mercy* and *Truth* thus met together in ſettling this account, *Love* would ſurely be of the party: great——great is it's power in cementing what has been broken, and wiping out wrongs even from the memory itſelf: and ſo it was——for the Levite aroſe up, and with him his Concubine and his ſervant, and they departed.

It ſerves no purpoſe to purſue the ſtory further; the cataſtrophe is horrid; and would lead us beyond the particular purpoſe for which I have enlarged upon thus much of it,—and that is, to diſcredit raſh judgment, and illuſtrate from the manner of conducting this drama, the courteſy which the *dramatis perſonæ* of every other piece may have a right to Almoſt one half of our time is ſpent in telling and hearing evil of one another— ſome unfortunate

knight is always upon this ſtage——and every hour brings forth ſomething ſtrange and terrible to fill up our diſcourſe and our aſtoniſhment, "How people can be ſo fooliſh!"——and it is well if the compliment ends there: ſo that there is not a ſocial virtue for which there is ſo conſtant a demand,—or conſequently ſo well worth cultivating, as that which oppoſes this unfriendly current:——many and rapid are the ſprings which feed it, and various and ſudden, God knows, are the guſts which render it unſafe to us in this ſhort paſſage of our life: let us make the diſcourſe as ſerviceable as we can, by tracing ſome of the moſt remarkable of them, up to their ſource.

And firſt, there is one miſerable inlet to this evil, and which by the way, if ſpeculation is ſuppoſed to precede practice, may have been derived, for ought I know, from ſome of our buſieſt enquirers after nature,—and that is, when with more zeal than knowlege, we account for phænomena, before we are ſure of their exiſtence.——*It is not the manner of the Romans to condemn any man to death*, (much leſs to be martyred) ſaid Feſtus;——*and doth*

our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth? cried Nicodemus; *and he that answereth*, or determineth, *a matter before he has heard it,—it is folly and a shame unto him.*—We are generally in such a haste to make our own decrees, that we pass over the justice of these,—and then the scene is so changed by it, that it is our folly only which is real, and that of the accused, which is imaginary: through too much precipitancy it will happen so;—and then the jest is spoiled,—or we have criticised our own shadow.

A second way is, when the process goes on more orderly, and we begin by getting information,—but do it from those suspected evidences, against which our Saviour warns us, when he bids us "*not to judge according to appearance:*"——and on the contrary, there are many things which appear to be,—which are not:——*Christ came eating and drinking,—behold a wine-bibber!*——he sat with sinners—he was their friend:——in many cases of which kind, *Truth*, like a modest matron, scorns art—and disdains to press herself forwards into

the circle to be ſeen:——ground ſufficient for *Suſpicion* to draw up the libel,—for *Malice* to give the torture,— or raſh *Judgment* to ſtart up and paſs a final ſentence.

A third way is, when the facts which denote miſconduct are leſs diſputable, but are commented upon with an aſperity of cenſure, which a humane or a gracious temper would ſpare: an abhorrence againſt what is criminal, is ſo fair a plea for this, and looks ſo like virtue in the face, that in a ſermon againſt raſh judgment, it would be unſeaſonable to call it in queſtion,—and yet, I declare, in the fulleſt torrent of exclamations which the guilty can deſerve, that the ſimple apoſtrophè, "Who made me to differ: why was not I an example?" would touch my heart more, and give me a better earneſt of the commentators,—than the moſt corroſive period you could add. The puniſhment of the unhappy, I fear, is enough without it—and were it not,—it is piteous, the tongue of a Chriſtian, whoſe religion is all candour and courteſy, ſhould be made the executioner. We find in the diſcourſe between Abraham and the rich man, though the one was

in heaven, and the other in hell, yet ſtill the patriarch treated him with mild language:—*Son!—Son, remember that thou in thy life-time*, etc, etc.——and in the diſpute about the body of Moſes, between the Arch-angel and the devil, (himſelf,) St. Jude tells us, he durſt not bring a railing accuſation againſt him;—it was unworthy his high character,—and indeed, might have been impolitic too; for if he had (as one of our divines notes upon the paſſage) the devil had been too hard for him at railing,—it was his own weapon,—and the baſeſt ſpirits after his example are the moſt expert at it.

This leads me to the obſervation of a fourth cruel inlet to this evil, and that is, the deſire of being thought men of wit and parts, and the vain expectation of coming honeſtly by the title, by ſhrewd and ſarcaſtic reflections upon whatever is done in the world. This is ſetting up trade upon the broken ſtock of other people's failings,—perhaps their misfortunes:—— ſo much good may it do them with what honour they can get,—the furtheſt extent of which, I think, is to be praiſed, as we do ſome ſauces, with tears in our eyes: it is a commerce moſt

illiberal; and as it requires no vaſt capital, too many embark in it, and ſo long as there are bad paſſions to be gratified,—and bad heads to judge, with ſuch it may paſs for wit, or at leaſt like ſome vile relation, whom all the family is aſhamed of, claim kindred with it, even in better companies. Whatever be the degree of its affinity, it has helped to give wit a bad name, as if the main eſſence of it was ſatire: certainly there is a difference between *Bitterneſs* and *Saltneſs*,—that is,—between the malignity and the feſtivity of wit,—the one is a mere quickneſs of apprehenſion, void of humanity,—and is a talent of the devil; the other comes down from the Father of Spirits, ſo pure and abſtracted from perſons, that willingly it hurts no man; or if it touches upon an indecorum, it is with that dexterity of true genius, which enables him rather to give a new colour to the abſurdity, and let it paſs ——He may ſmile at the ſhape of the obeliſk raiſed to another's fame,—but the malignant wit will level it at once with the ground, and build his own upon the ruins of it ——.

What then, ye raſh cenſurers of the world!

have ye no manſions for your credit, but thoſe from whence you have extruded the right owners? are there no regions for you to ſhine in, that ye deſcend for it, into the low caverns of abuſe and crimination? have ye no ſeats——but thoſe of the ſcornful to ſit down in? if *Honour* has miſtook his road, or the *Virtues* in their exceſſes have approached too near the confines of Vice, are they therefor to be caſt down the precipice? muſt Beauty for ever be trampled upon in the dirt for one——one falſe ſtep? and ſhall not one virtue or good quality, out of the thouſand the fair penitent may have left, —ſhall no one of them be ſuffered to ſtand by her?——Juſt God of Heaven and Earth!——

—But thou art merciful, loving and righteous, and lookeſt down with pity upon theſe wrongs thy ſervants do unto each other: pardon us we beſeech thee, for them, and all our tranſgreſſions; let it not be remembered, that we were brethren of the ſame fleſh, the ſame feelings and infirmities.——O my God! write it not down in thy book, that thou madeſt us merciful, after thy own image;——that thou haſt given us a religion ſo courteous,—ſo

good temper'd,—that every precept of it carries a balm along with it to heal the ſoreneſs of our natures, and ſweeten our ſpirits, that we might live with ſuch kind intercourſe in this world, as will fit us to exiſt together in a better.

SERMON IV.

FELIX's Behaviour towards PAUL examined.

SERMON IV.

ACTS xxiv. 26.

He hoped alſo, that money ſhould have been given him of Paul, that he might looſe him.

A NOBLE object to take up the conſideration of the Roman governor!

——"*He hoped that money ſhould have been given him!*"——For what end? to enable him to judge betwixt right and wrong!——and, from whence was it to be wrung? from the poor ſcrip of a diſciple of the carpenter's ſon, who left nothing to his followers but poverty and ſufferings.——

And was this Felix!——the great, the noble Felix!——Felix the happy!——the gallant Felix who kept Druſilla!——Could he do this?——baſe paſſion! what can'ſt thou not make us do?

Let us conſider the whole tranſaction.

Paul, in the beginning of this chapter, had

been accuſed before Felix, by Tertullus, of very grievous crimes,—of being a peſtilent fellow,—a mover of ſeditions, and a prophaner of the temple, etc.——To which accuſation, the apoſtle, having liberty from Felix to reply, he makes his defence from the 10th to the 22d verſe, to this purport. He ſhews him firſt, that the whole charge was deſtitute of all proof; which he openly challenges them to produce againſt him, if they had it;——that on the contrary, he was ſo far from being the man, Tertullus had repreſented, that the very principles of the religion with which he then ſtood charged,—and which they called hereſy, led him to be the moſt unexceptionable in his conduct, by the continual exerciſe which it demanded of him, of having a conſcience void of offence at all times, both towards God and man; that conſiſtently with this, his adverſaries had neither found him in the temple diſputing with any man, neither raiſing up the people, neither in the ſynagogue, or in the city,—for this he appeals to themſeves:—— that it was but twelve days ſince he came up to Jeruſalem for to worſhip:——that during that

time, when he purified in the temple, he did it as became him, without noiſe, without tumult; this he calls upon the Jews who came from Aſia, and were eye-witneſſes of his behaviour, to atteſt;——and, in a word, he urges the whole defence before Felix in ſo ſtrong a manner, and with ſuch plain and natural arguments of his innocence, as to leave no colour for his adverſaries to reply.

There was, however, ſtill one adverſary in this court,—though ſilent, yet not ſatisfied——

—Spare thy eloquence, Tertullus! roll up the charge: a more notable orator than thyſelf is riſen up,—it is AVARICE, and that too, in the moſt fatal place for the priſoner it could have taken poſſeſſion of,—it is in the heart of the man who judges him.

If Felix believed Paul innocent, and acted accordingly,—(that is) releaſed him without reward,—this ſubtile advocate told him he would loſe one of the profits of his employment—and if he acknowleged the faith of Chriſt, which Paul occaſionally explained in his defence,—it told him, he might loſe the employment itſelf;——ſo notwithſtanding the

character of the apoſtle appeared (as it was) moſt ſpotleſs; and the faith he profeſſed ſo very clear, that as he urged it, the heart gave it's conſent,—yet, at the ſame time, the paſſion rebelled, and ſo ſtrong an intereſt was formed thereby, againſt the firſt impreſſions in favour of the man and his cauſe, that both were diſmiſſed;—the one to a more convenient hearing which never came; the other to the hardſhips of a priſon for two half years,—hoping, as the text informs us, that money ſhould have been given him; and even at the laſt, when he left the province, willing to do the Jews a pleaſure,—that is,—to ſerve his intereſt in another ſhape with all the conviction upon his mind, that he had done nothing worthy of bonds, he, nevertheleſs, left the holy man bound, and conſigned over to the hopeleſs proſpect of ending his days in the ſame ſtate of confinement, in which he had ungenerouſly left him.

One would imagine, as covetouſneſs is a vice not naturally cruel in itſelf, that there muſt certainly have been a mixture of other motives in the governor's breaſt, to account for a proceeding ſo contrary to humanity and his own

conviction; and could it be of uſe to raiſe conjectures upon it, there ſeems but too probable grounds for ſuch a ſuppoſition. It ſeems that Druſilla, whoſe curioſity, upon a double account, had led her to hear Paul,—(for ſhe was a daughter of Abraham——as well as of Eve) ——was a character, which might have figured very well even in our own times: for as Joſephus tells us, ſhe had left the Jew her huſband, and without any pretence in their law to juſtify a divorce, had given herſelf up without ceremony to Felix; for which cauſe, though ſhe is here called his wife, ſhe was in reaſon and juſtice the wife of another man,—and conſequently lived in an open ſtate of adultery. So that when Paul, in explaining the faith of Chriſt, took occaſion to argue upon the morality of the goſpel,--and urged the eternal laws, of juſtice,—the unchangeable obligations to temperance, of which chaſtity was a breach,—it was ſcarce poſſible to frame his diſcourſe ſo, (had he wiſhed to temporize) but that either her intereſt or her love muſt have taken offence: and though we do not read, like Felix, that ſhe trembled at the account, it is yet natural to

imagine ſhe was affected with other paſſions, of which the apoſtle might feel the effects——and it was well he ſuffered no more, if two ſuch violent enemies as luſt and avarice were combined againſt him.

But this by the way,—for as the text ſeems only to acknowlege one of theſe motives, it is not our buſineſs to aſſign the other.

It is obſervable, that this ſame apoſtle, ſpeaking, in his epiſtle to Timothy, of the ill effects of this ſame ruling paſſion, affirms, that it is the root of all evil; and I make no doubt but the rememberance of his own ſufferings had no ſmall ſhare in the ſeverity of the reflection.—— Infinite are the examples, where the love of money is only a ſubordinate and miniſterial paſſion, exerciſed for the ſupport of ſome other vices; and it is generally found, when there is either ambition, prodigality, or luſt, to be fed by it, that it then rages with the leaſt mercy and diſcretion; in which caſes, ſtrictly ſpeaking, it is not the root of other evils,—but other evils are the root of it.

This forces me to recall what I have ſaid upon covetouſneſs, as a vice not naturally cruel:

it is not apt to repreſent itſelf to our imaginations, at firſt ſight, under that idea; we conſider it only as a mean, worthleſs turn of mind, incapable of judging or doing what is right: but as it is a vice which does not always ſet up for itſelf,—to know truly what it is in this reſpect, we muſt know what maſters it ſerves;——they are many, and of various caſts and humours,—and each one lends it ſomething of its own complexional tint and character.

This, I ſuppoſe, may be the cauſe that there is a greater and more whimſical myſtery in the love of money, than in the darkeſt and moſt nonſenſical problem that ever was pored on.

Even at the beſt, and when the paſſion ſeems to ſeek nothing more than its own amuſement,—there is little——very little, I fear, to be ſaid for it's humanity.——It may be a ſport to the miſer,—but conſider,—it muſt be death and deſtruction to others.——The moment this ſordid humour begins to govern——farewel all honeſt and natural affections! farewel all he owes to parents, to children, to friends!——how faſt the obligations vaniſh! ſee!——he is

now ſtripped of all feelings whatever:——the ſhrill cry of juſtice,—and the low lamentation of humble diſtreſs, are notes equally beyond his compaſs.——Eternal God!—he paſſes by one whom thou haſt juſt bruiſed, without one penſive reflection:——he enters the cabin of the widow whoſe huſband and child thou haſt taken thyſelf,—exacts his bond, without a ſigh! Heaven! if I am to be tempted,—let it be by glory,—by ambition,—by ſome generous and manly vice:——if I muſt fall, let it be by ſome paſſion which thou haſt planted in my nature, which ſhall not harden my heart, but leave me room at leaſt to retreat and come back to thee.

It would be eaſy here to add the common arguments which reaſon offers againſt this vice; but they are ſo well underſtood, both in matter and form,—it is needleſs.

I might cite to you what Seneca ſays upon it——but the misfortune is, that at the ſame time he was writing againſt riches, he was enjoying a great eſtate, and uſing every means to make that eſtate ſtill greater.

With infinite pleaſure might a preacher enrich his diſcourſe in this place, by weaving in

to it all the ſmart things, which ancient or modern wits have ſaid upon the love of money: —he might inform you,

—"That poverty wants ſome things—— "that covetouſneſs wanteth all."

"That nature is content with few things,— "or that nature is never ſatisfied at all, etc."

The reflection of our Saviour, *That the life of man conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth*, — ſpeaks more to the heart—and the ſingle hint of the *Camel*, and what a very narrow paſſage he has to go,— has more coercion in it, than all the ſee-ſaws of philoſophy.

I ſhall endeavour therefor to draw ſuch other reflections from this piece of ſacred ſtory, as are applicable to human life,—and more likely to be of uſe.

There is nothing generally in which our happineſs and honour are more nearly concerned, than in forming true notions both of men and things; for in proportion as we think rightly of them, we approve ourſelves to the world,— and as we govern ourſelves by ſuch judgments, ſo we ſecure our peace and well-being in paſſing

through it: the falſe ſteps and miſcarriages in life, iſſuing from a defect in this capital point, are ſo many and fatal, that there can be nothing more inſtructive than an enquiry into the cauſes of this perverſion, which often appears ſo very groſs in us, that were you to take a view of the world,—ſee what notions it entertains, and by what conſiderations it is governed, you would ſay of the miſtakes of human judgment, what the prophet does of the folly of human actions,—"*That we were wiſe to do evil, but to judge rightly, had no underſtanding.*"

That in many dark and abſtracted queſtions of mere ſpeculation, we ſhould err——is not ſtrange: we live among myſteries and riddles, and almoſt every thing which comes in our way, in one light or other, may be ſaid to baffle our underſtandings,—yet ſeldom, ſo as to miſtake in extremities, and take one contrary for another:—it is very rare, for inſtance, that we take the virtue of a plant to be hot, when it is extremely cold,—or, that we try the experiment of opium to keep us waking:——yet, this we are continually attempting in the conduct

of life, as well as in the great ends and meaſures of it. That ſuch wrong determinations in us do not ariſe from any defect of judgment inevitably miſleading us,—would reflect diſhonour upon God; as if he had made and ſent men into the world on purpoſe to play the fool. His all-bountiful hand made his judgment like his heart, upright, and the inſtances of his ſagacity in other things abundantly confirm it: we are led therefor in courſe to a ſuppoſition, that in all inconſiſtent inſtances, there is a ſecret bias, ſome how or other, hung upon the mind, which turns it aſide from reaſon and truth.

What this is, if we do not care to ſearch for it in ourſelves, we ſhall find it regiſtered in this tranſaction of Felix: and we may depend, that in all wrong judgments whatever, in ſuch plain caſes as this, that the ſame explanation muſt be given of it, which is given in the text,—namely, that it is ſome ſelfiſh conſideration —ſome ſecret dirty engagement with ſome little appetite, which does us ſo much diſhonour.

The judgments of the more diſintereſted and impartial of us, receive no ſmall tincture from

our affections: we generally conſult them in all doubtful points, and it happens well if the matter in queſtion is not almoſt ſettled, before the arbitrator is called into the debate;——but in the more flagrant inſtances, where the paſſions govern the whole man, it is melancholy to ſee the office to which reaſon, the great prerogative of his nature, is reduced; ſerving the lower appetites in the diſhoneſt drudgery of finding out arguments to juſtify the preſent purſuit.

To judge rightly of our own worth, we ſhould retire a little from the world, to ſee all its pleaſures——and pains too, in their proper ſize and dimenſions:——this, no doubt, was the reaſon St. Paul, when he intended to convert Felix, began his diſcourſe upon the day of judgment, on purpoſe to take the heart off from this world and its pleaſures, which diſhonour the underſtanding, ſo as to turn the wiſeſt of men into fools and children.

If you enlarge your obſervations upon this plan, you will find where the evil lies which has ſupported thoſe deſperate opinions, which

have ſo long divided the Chriſtian world,——and are likely to divide it for ever.

Conſider popery well; you will be convinced, that the trueſt definition which can be given of it, is,—That it is a pecuniary ſyſtem, well contrived to operate upon men's paſſions and weakneſs, whilſt their pockets are o'picking: run through all the points of difference between us,—and when you ſee, that in every one of them, they ſerve the ſame end which Felix had in view, either of money or power; there is little room left to doubt whence the cloud ariſes, which is ſpread over the underſtanding.

If this reaſoning is concluſive with regard to thoſe who merely differ from us in religion,—let us try if it will not hold good with regard to thoſe who have none at all,—or rather, who affect to treat all perſuaſions of it with ridicule alike. Thanks to good ſenſe, good manners, and a more enlarged knowlege, this humour is going down, and ſeems to be ſettling at preſent, chiefly amongſt the inferior claſſes of people——where it is likely to reſt: as for the loweſt ranks, though they are apt enough to follow the modes of their betters, yet are

not likely to be ſtruck with this one, of making merry with that which is their conſolation; they are too ſerious a ſet of poor people ever heartily to enter into it.——

There is enough, however, of it in the world to ſay, that this all-ſacred ſyſtem, which holds the world in harmony and peace, is too often the firſt object, that the giddy and inconſiderate make choice of to try the temper of their wits upon. Now, of the numbers who make this experiment,—do you believe that one in a thouſand does it from conviction,—or from arguments which a courſe of ſtudy,—much cool reaſoning,—and a ſober enquiry into antiquity, and the true merits of the queſtion, has furniſhed him with?——The years and way of life of the moſt forward of theſe lead us to a different explanation.

Religion, which lays ſo many reſtraints upon us, is a troubleſome companion to thoſe who will lay no reſtraints upon themſelves;—and for this reaſon there is nothing more common to be obſerved, than that the little arguments and cavils, which ſuch men have gathered up againſt it, in the early part of their

lives,—how conſiderable ſoever they may have appeared, when viewed through their paſſions and prejudices, which give an unnatural turn to all objects,—yet, when the edge of appetite has been worn down, and the heat of the purſuit pretty well over,— and reaſon and judgment have got poſſeſſion of their empire ——

——They ſeldom fail of bringing the loſt ſheep back to his fold.

May God bring us all there. Amen.

SERMON V.

The PRODIGAL SON.

SERMON V.

LUKE XV. 13.

And not many days after, the younger ſon gathered all he had together, and took his journey into a far country.——

I KNOW not whether the remark is to our honour or otherwiſe, that leſſons of wiſdom have never ſuch power over us, as when they are wrought into the heart, through the ground-work of a ſtory which engages the paſſions: is it that we are like iron, and muſt firſt be heated before we can be wrought upon? or, is the heart ſo in love with deceit, that where a true report will not reach it, we muſt cheat it with a fable, in order to come at truth?

Whether this parable of the prodigal (for ſo it is uſually called)——is really ſuch, or built upon ſome ſtory known at that time in Jeruſalem, is not much to the purpoſe; it is given us to enlarge upon, and turn to the beſt moral account we can.

"A certain man, says our Saviour, had two "sons, and the younger of them said to his "father, Give me the portion of goods which "falls to me: and he divided unto them his "substance. And not many days after, the "younger son gathered all together, and took "his jonrney into a far country, and there "wasted his substance with riotous living."

The account is short: the interesting and pathetic passages, with which such a transaction would be necessarily connected, are left to be supplied by the heart:——the story is silent——but nature is not:——much kind advice, and many a tender expostulation would fall from the father's lips, no doubt, upon this occasion.

He would dissuade his son from the folly of so rash an enterprize, by shewing him the dangers of the journey,—in the experience of his age,—the hazards his life, his fortune, his virtue would run, without a guide, without a friend: he would tell him of the many snares and temptations which he had to avoid, or encounter at every step,—the pleasures which would solicit him in every luxurious court,—the little knowlege he could gain—except that

of evil: he would ſpeak of the ſeductions of women,--their charms——their poiſons:—— what hapleſs indulgences he might give way to, when far from reſtraint, and the check of giving his father pain.

The diſſuaſive would but inflame his deſire.——

He gathers all together.——

——I ſee the picture of his departure:—the camels and aſſes loaden with his ſubſtance, detached on one ſide of the piece, and already on their way:——the prodigal ſon ſtanding on the fore ground, with a forced ſedateneſs, ſtruggling againſt the fluttering movement of joy, upon his deliverance from reſtraint:——the elder brother holding his hand, as if unwilling to let it go:——the father,——ſad moment! with a firm look, covering a prophetic ſentiment, "that all would not go well with his child,"—approaching to embrace him, and bid him adieu.—Poor inconſiderate youth! from whoſe arms art thou flying? From what a ſhelter art thou going forth into the ſtorm? Art thou weary of a father's affection, of a father's care? or, Hopeſt thou to find a warmer

intereſt, a truer counſellor, or a kinder friend in a land of ſtrangers, where youth is made a prey, and ſo many thouſands are confederated to deceive them, and live by their ſpoils?

We will ſeek no farther than this idea, for the extravagancies by which the prodigal ſon added one unhappy example to the number: his fortune waſted,—the followers of it fled in courſe,—the wants of nature remain, the hand of God gone forth againſt him,—"*For when he had ſpent all, a mighty famine aroſe in that country.*"—Heaven! have pity upon the youth, for he is in hunger and diſtreſs, ſtrayed out of the reach of a parent, who counts every hour of his abſence with anguiſh,—cut off from all tender offices, by his folly,——and from relief and charity from others, by the calamity of the times.——

Nothing ſo powerfully calls home the mind as diſtreſs: the tenſe fibre then relaxes,—the ſoul retires to itſelf,—ſits penſive and ſuſceptible of right impreſſions: if we have a friend, it is then we think of him; if a benefactor, at that moment all his kindneſſes preſs upon our mind.—— Gracious and bountiful God! Is it

not for this, that they who in their proſperity forget thee, do yet remember and return to thee in the hour of their ſorrow? When our heart is in heavineſs, upon whom can we think but thee, who knoweſt our neceſſities afar off, —putteſt all our tears in thy bottle,—ſeeſt every careful thought, heareſt every ſigh and melancholy groan we utter. ——

Strange!—that we ſhould only begin to think of God with comfort,—when with joy and comfort we can think of nothing elſe.

Man ſurely is a compound of riddles and contradictions: by the law of his nature he avoids pain, and yet *unleſs he ſuffers in the fleſh, he will not ceaſe from ſin*, though it is ſure to bring pain and miſery upon his head for ever.

Whilſt all went pleaſurably on with the prodigal, we hear not one word concerning his father——no pang of remorſe for the ſufferings in which he had left him, or reſolution of returning, to make up the account of his folly: his firſt hour of diſtreſs ſeemed to be his firſt hour of wiſdom:——*When he came to himſelf, he ſaid, how many hired ſervants of my father*

intereſt, a truer counſellor, or a kinder friend in a land of ſtrangers, where youth is made a prey, and ſo many thouſands are confederated to deceive them, and live by their ſpoils?

We will ſeek no farther than this idea, for the extravagancies by which the prodigal ſon added one unhappy example to the number: his fortune waſted,—the followers of it fled in courſe,—the wants of nature remain, the hand of God gone forth againſt him,—"*For when he had ſpent all, a mighty famine aroſe in that country.*"—Heaven! have pity upon the youth, for he is in hunger and diſtreſs, ſtrayed out of the reach of a parent, who counts every hour of his abſence with anguiſh,—cut off from all tender offices, by his folly,——and from relief and charity from others, by the calamity of the times.——

Nothing ſo powerfully calls home the mind as diſtreſs: the tenſe fibre then relaxes,—the ſoul retires to itſelf,—ſits penſive and ſuſceptible of right impreſſions: if we have a friend, it is then we think of him; if a benefactor, at that moment all his kindneſſes preſs upon our mind.—— Gracious and bountiful God! Is it

not for this, that they who in their proſperity forget thee, do yet remember and return to thee in the hour of their ſorrow? When our heart is in heavineſs, upon whom can we think but thee, who knoweſt our neceſſities afar off, —putteſt all our tears in thy bottle,—ſeeſt every careful thought, heareſt every ſigh and melancholy groan we utter. ——

Strange!—that we ſhould only begin to think of God with comfort,—when with joy and comfort we can think of nothing elſe.

Man ſurely is a compound of riddles and contradictions: by the law of his nature he avoids pain, and yet *unleſs he ſuffers in the fleſh, he will not ceaſe from ſin*, though it is ſure to bring pain and miſery upon his head for ever.

Whilſt all went pleaſurably on with the prodigal, we hear not one word concerning his father——no pang of remorſe for the ſufferings in which he had left him, or reſolution of returning, to make up the account of his folly: his firſt hour of diſtreſs ſeemed to be his firſt hour of wiſdom:——*When he came to himſelf, he ſaid, how many hired ſervants of my father*

have bread enough and to ſpare, whilſt I periſh!—

Of all the terrors of nature, that of one day or another dying by hunger, is the greateſt, and it is wiſely wove into our frame to awaken man to induſtry, and call forth his talents; and though we ſeem to go on careleſsly, ſporting with it as we do with other terrors——yet, he that ſees this enemy fairly, and in his moſt frightful ſhape, will need no long remonſtrance, to make him turn out of the way to avoid him.

It was the caſe of the prodigal—he aroſe to go unto his father.——

—— Alas! how ſhall he tell his ſtory? Ye who have trod this round, tell me in what words he ſhall give in to his father, the ſad *Items* of his extravagance and folly?

——The feaſts and banquets which he gave to whole cities in the eaſt,—the coſts of Aſiatic rarities,—and of Aſiatic cooks to dreſs them—the expences of ſinging men and ſinging women,—the flut, the harp, the ſackbut, and of all kinds of muſic—the dreſs of the Perſian courts, how magnificent! their ſlaves how numerous!——their chariots, their horſes, their palaces, their furniture, what immenſe ſums

they had devoured!——what expectations from ſtrangers of condition! what exactions!

How ſhall the youth make his father comprehend, that he was cheated at Damaſcus by one of the beſt men in the world; that he had lent a part of his ſubſtance to a friend at Nineveh, who had fled off with it to the Ganges;—that a whore of Babylon had ſwallowed his beſt pearl, and anointed the whole city with his balm of Gilead;—that he had been ſold by a man of honour for twenty ſhekels of ſilver, to a worker in graven images;——that the images he had purchaſed had profited him nothing;—that they could not be tranſported acroſs the wilderneſs, and had been burned with fire at Shuſan; that the* apes and peacocks, which he had ſent for from Tarſis, lay dead upon his hands; and that the mummies had not been dead long enough, which had been brought him out of Egypt:——that all had gone wrong ſince the day he forſook his father's houſe.

—— Leave the ſtory —— it will be told more conciſely.——*When he was yet afar off, his fa-*

* See 2 Chronicles ix. 21.

ther ſaw him, — Compaſſion told it in three words- —*he fell upon his neck and kiſſed him.*

Great is the power of eloquence: but never is it ſo great as when it pleads along with nature, and the culprit is a child ſtrayed from his duty, and returned to it again with tears: Caſuiſts may ſettle the point as they will: but what could a parent ſee more in the account, than the natural one, of an ingenuous heart too open for the world,—ſmitten with ſtrong ſenſations of pleaſures, and ſuffered to ſally forth unarmed into the midſt of enemies ſtronger than himſelf?

Generoſity ſorrows as much for the overmatched, as pity herſelf does.

The idea of a ſon ſo ruined, would double the father's careſſes: every effuſion of his tenderneſs would add bitterneſs to his ſon's remorſe.—"Gracious heaven! what a father have I rendered miſerable!"

And he ſaid, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon.

But the father ſaid, Bring forth the beſt robe ———

O ye affections! how fondly do you play at croſs-purpoſes with each other?——It is the natural dialogue of true tranſport: joy is not methodical; and where an offender, beloved, overcharges itſelf in the offence,—words are too cold; and a conciliated heart replies by tokens of eſteem.

And he ſaid unto his ſervants, Bring forth the beſt robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and ſhoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and let us eat and drink and be merry.

When the affections ſo kindly break looſe, joy is another name for religion.

We look up as we taſte it: the cold Stoic without, when he hears the dancing and the muſic, may aſk ſullenly, (with the elder brother) what it means; and refuſe to enter: but the humane and compaſſionate all fly impetuouſly to the banquet, given *for a ſon who was dead and is alive again,—who was loſt and is found*. Gentle ſpirits, light up the pavillion with a ſacred fire; and parental love, and filial piety lead in the maſk with riot and wild feſtivity!——Was it not for this that God gave

man muſic to ſtrike upon the kindly paſſions; that nature taught the feet to dance to its movements, and as chief governeſs of the feaſt, poured forth wine into the goblet, to crown it with gladneſs?

The intention of this parable is ſo clear from the occaſion of it, that it will not be neceſſary to perplex it with any tedious explanation: it was deſigned by way of indirect remonſtrance to the Scribes and Phariſees, who animadverted upon our Saviour's conduct, for entering ſo freely into conferences with ſinners, in order to reclaim them. To that end, he propoſes the parable of the ſhepherd, who left his ninety and nine ſheep that were ſafe in the fold, to go and ſeek for one ſheep that was gone aſtray, —telling them in other places, that they who were whole wanted not a phyſician,—but they that were ſick:--and here to carry on the ſame leſſon, and to prove how acceptable ſuch a recovery was to God, he relates this account of the prodigal ſon and his welcome reception.

I know not whether it would be a ſubject of much edification to convince you here, that our Saviour by the prodigal ſon, particularly

pointed at thoſe who were *ſinners of the Gentiles*, and were recovered by divine grace to repentance;—and that by the elder brother, he intended as manifeſtly the more froward of the Jews, who envied their converſion, and thought it a kind of wrong to their primogeniture, in being made fellow-heirs with them of the promiſes of God.

Theſe uſes have been ſo ably ſet forth, in ſo many good ſermons upon the prodigal ſon, that I ſhall turn aſide from them at preſent, and content myſelf with ſome reflections upon the fatal paſſion which led him,—and ſo many thouſands after the example, *to gather all he had together, and take his journey into a far country.*

The love of variety, or curioſity of ſeeing new things, which is the ſame, or at leaſt a ſiſter paſſion to it,—ſeems wove into the frame of every ſon and daughter of Adam; we uſually ſpeak of it as one of nature's levities, though planted with in us for the ſolid purpoſes of carrying forwards the mind to freſh enquiry and knowlege: ſtrip us of it, the mind (I fear) would doze for ever over the preſent page; and we ſhould all of us reſt at eaſe with ſuch ob-

jects as preſented themſelves in the pariſh or province where we firſt drew our breath.

It is to this ſpur which is ever in our ſides, that we owe the impatience of this deſire for travelling: the paſſion is no way bad,--but as others,—in it's miſmanagement or exceſs;—— order it rightly, the advantages are worth the purſuit; chief of which are——to learn the languages, the laws and cuſtoms, and underſtand the government and intereſt of other nations,--to acquire an urbanity and confidence of behaviour, and fit the mind more eaſily for converſation and diſcourſe; to take us out of the company of our aunts and grandmothers, and from the track of nurſery miſtakes; and by ſhewing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgments——by taſting perpetually the varieties of nature, to know what *is good*—by obſerving the addreſs and arts of men, to conceive what *is ſincere*,—and by ſeeing the difference of ſo many various humours and manners,—to look into ourſelves and form our own.

This is ſome part of the cargo we might return with; but the impulſe of ſeeing new ſights,

augmented with that of getting clear from all leſſons both of wiſdom and reproof at home—carries our youth too early out, to turn this venture to much account; on the contrary, if the ſcene painted of the prodigal in his travels, looks more like a copy than an original,—will it not be well if ſuch an adventurer, with ſo unpromiſing a ſetting out,—without *carte*,—without compaſs,—be not caſt away for ever;—and may he not be ſaid to eſcape well———if he returns to his country, only as naked as he firſt left it?

But you will ſend an able pilot with your ſon ———a ſcholar. ———

If wiſdom can ſpeak in no other language but Greek or Latin,—you will do well——or if mathematics will make a man a gentleman,—or natural philoſophy but teach him to make a bow,—he may be of ſome ſervice in introducing your ſon into good ſocieties, and ſupporting him in them when he has done——but the upſhot will be generally this, that in the moſt preſſing occaſions of addreſs,—if he is a mere man of reading, the unhappy youth will have

the tutor to carry,—and not the tutor to carry him.

But you will avoid this extreme; he ſhall be eſcorted by one who knows the world, not merely from books—but from his own experience:——a man who has been employed on ſuch ſervices, and thrice made the *tour of Europe, without ſucceſs.*

——That is, without breaking his own, or his pupil's neck;——for if he is ſuch as my eyes have ſeen! ſome broken *Swiſs valet de chambre*,—ſome general undertaker, who will perform the journey in ſo many months "*if God permit*,"—much knowlege will not accrue;—ſome profit at leaſt—he will learn the amount to a halfpenny, of every ſtage from Calais to Rome;—he will be carried to the beſt inns,—inſtructed where there is the beſt wine, and ſup a livre cheaper, than if the youth had been left to make the tour and the bargain himſelf.——Look at your governor! I beſeech you:——ſee, he is an inch taller as he relates the advantages. ———

——And here endeth his pride his knowlege and his uſe.

But when your ſon gets abroad, he will be taken out of his hand, by his ſociety with men of rank and letters, with whom he will paſs the greateſt part of his time.

Let me obſerve in the firſt place,—that company which is really good is very rare——and very ſhy: but you have ſurmounted this difficulty; and procured him the beſt letters of recommendation to the moſt eminent and reſpectable in every capital.——

And I anſwer, that he will obtain all by them, which courteſy ſtrictly ſtands obliged to pay on ſuch occaſions,—but no more.

There is nothing in which we are ſo much deceived, as in the advantages propoſed from our connections and diſcourſe with the literati, etc. in foreign parts; eſpecially if the experiment is made before we are matured by years or ſtudy.

Converſation is a traffic; and if you enter into it, without ſome ſtock of knowlege, to balance the account perpetually betwixt you,—the trade drops at once: and this is the reaſon,—however it may be boaſted to the contrary, why travellers have ſo little (eſpecially good)

converſation with natives,—owing to their ſuſpicion,—or perhaps conviction, that there is nothing to be extracted from the converſation of young itinerants, worth the trouble of their bad language,--or the interruption of their viſits.

The pain on theſe occaſions is uſually reciprocal; the conſequence of which is, that the diſappointed youth ſeeks an eaſier ſociety; and as bad company is always ready,—and ever lying in wait, the career is ſoon finiſhed; and the poor prodigal returns the ſame object of pity, with the prodigal in the goſpel.

SERMON VI.

National Mercies conſidered.

On the Inauguration of his preſent Majeſty.

SERMON VI.

DEUTERONOMY vi. 20, 21.

And when thy ſon aſketh thee in time to come, ſaying, What mean the teſtimonies, and the ſtatutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? then thou ſhalt ſay unto thy ſon, We were Pharoah's bondſmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

THESE are the words which Moſes left as a ſtanding anſwer for the children of Iſrael to give their poſterity, who in time to come might become ignorant or unmindful of the many and great mercies, which God had vouchſafed to their forefathers; all which had terminated in that one of their deliverance out of bondage.

Though they were directed to ſpeak in this manner, each man to his ſon, yet one cannot ſuppoſe, that the direction ſhould be neceſſary for the next generation,—for the children of

thoſe who had been eye-witneſſes of God's Providences: it does not ſeem likely that any of them ſhould arrive to that age of reaſoning, which would put them upon aſking the ſuppoſed queſtion, and not be, long before hand, inſtructed in the anſwer. Every parent would tell his child the hardſhips of his captivity, and the amazing particulars of his deliverance: the ſtory was ſo uncommon,—ſo full of wonder,—and withal, the recital of it would ever be a matter of ſuch tranſport, it could not poſſibly be kept a ſecret:——the piety and gratitude of one generation would anticipate the curioſity of another;——their ſons would learn the ſtory with their language.

This probably might be the caſe with the firſt or ſecond race of people, but in proceſs of time, things might take a different turn: a long and undiſturbed poſſeſſion of their liberties might blunt the ſenſe of thoſe providences of God, which had procured them, and ſet the rememberance of all his mercies, at too great a diſtance from their hearts. After they had for ſome years been eaſed of every real burden, an exceſs of freedom might make them reſtleſs

under every imaginary one, and amongſt others that of their religion: from thence they might ſeek occaſion to enquire into the foundation and fitneſs of it's ceremonies, it's ſtatutes and it's judgments.

They might aſk, What meant ſo many commands in matters which to them appeared indifferent in their own natures? what policy in ordaining them? and, what obligation could there ly upon reaſonable creatures, to comply with a multitude of ſuch unaccountable injunctions, ſo unworthy the wiſdom of God?

Hereafter, poſſibly, they might go farther lengths; and though their natural bent was generally towards ſuperſtition, yet ſome adventurers, as is ever the caſe, might ſteer for the oppoſite coaſt, and as they advanced might diſcover that all religions, of what denominations or complexions ſoever, were alike: that the religion of their own country in particular, was a contrivance of the Prieſts and Levites,—a phantom dreſſed out in a terrifying garb of their own making, to keep weak minds in fear: ——that it's rites and ceremonies, and num-

berleſs injunctions, were ſo many different wheels in the ſame political engine, put in, no doubt, to amuſe the ignorant, and keep them in ſuch a ſtate of darkneſs, as clerical juggling requires.

That as for the moral part of it, though it was unexceptional in itſelf—— yet it was a piece of intelligence they did not ſtand in want of; men had natural reaſon always to have found it out,——and wiſdom to have practiſed it, without Moſes's aſſiſtance.

Nay, poſſibly, in proceſs of time, they might arrive at greater improvements in religious controverſy:——when they had given their ſyſtem of infidelity all the ſtrength it could admit of from reaſon. they might begin to embelliſh it with ſome more ſprightly conceits and turns of ridicule.

Some wanton Iſraelite, when he had eaten and was full, might give free ſcope and indulgence to this talent: as arguments and ſober reaſoning failed, he might turn the edge of wit againſt types and ſymbols, and treat all the myſteries of his religion, and every thing that could be ſaid upon ſo ſerious a ſubject with raillery and mirth: he might give vent to a

world of pleaſantry upon many ſacred paſſages of his law: he might banter the golden calf, or the brazen ſerpent with great courage,—and confound himſelf in the diſtinctions of clean and unclean beaſts, by the deſperate ſallies of his wit againſt them.

He could but poſſibly take one ſtep further; when the land, which flowed with milk and honey, had quite worn out the impreſſions of his yoke, and bleſſings began to multiply upon his hands, he might draw this curious concluſion, that there was no Being who was the author and beſtower of them,—but that it was their own arm, and the mightineſs of Iſraelitiſh ſtrength which had put them, and kept them in poſſeſſion of ſo much happineſs.——

O Moſes! How would thy meek and patient ſpirit have been put to the torture by ſuch a return! If a propenſity towards ſuperſtition in the Iſraelites, did once betray thee into an exceſs of anger, that thou threweſt the two tables out of thy hands, which God had wrote, and careleſsly hazarded'ſt the whole treaſure of the world,—with what indignation and honeſt anguiſh wouldſt thou have heard the ſcof-

ſings of thoſe who denied the hand which brought them forth, and ſaid, Who is God, that we ſhould obey his voice? With what force and vivacity wouldſt thou have reproached them with the hiſtory of their own nation: ——that if too free an enjoyment of God's bleſſings had made them forget to look backwards,—it was neceſſary to remind them, that their forefathers were Pharaoh's bondſmen in Egypt, without proſpect of deliverance; that the chains of their captivity had been fixed and rivetted by a ſucceſſion of four hundred and thirty years, without the interruption of one ſtruggle for their liberty: that after the expiration of that hopeleſs period, when no natural means favoured the event, they were ſnatched almoſt againſt their own wills, out of the hands of their oppreſſors, and led through an ocean of dangers, to the poſſeſion of a land of plenty: ——that this change of their affairs was not the produce of chance or fortune,—or was it projected or executed by any atchievement or plan of human device, which might ſoon again be defeated by ſuperior ſtrength or policy from without, or from force of accidents from within,

from change of circumſtances, humours and paſſions of men, all which generally had a ſway in the riſe and fall of kingdoms;—but that all was brought about by the power and goodneſs of God, who ſaw and pitied the afflictions of a diſtreſſed people, and by a chain of great and mighty deliverances, ſet them free from the yoke of oppreſſion.

That ſince that miraculous eſcape, a ſeries of ſucceſſes not to be accounted for by ſecond cauſes, and the natural courſe of events, had demonſtrated not only God's providence in general, but his particular providence and attachment to them——that nations greater and mightier than they were driven out before them, and their lands given to them for an everlaſting poſſeſſion ——

This was what they ſhould teach their children, and their children's children after them. ——Happy generations, for whom ſo joyful a leſſon was prepared! happy indeed! had ye at all times known to have made the uſe of it, which Moſes continually exhorted,— *of drawing nigh unto God with all our hearts, who had been ſo nigh unto you.*

And here let us drop the argument, as it reſpects the Jews, and for a moment turn it towards ourſelves: the preſent occaſion, and the recollection which is natural upon it, of the many other parts of this complicated bleſſing, vouchſafed to us, ſince we became a nation, making it hard to deſiſt from ſuch an application.

I begin with the firſt in order of time, as well as the greateſt of national deliverances,—our deliverance from darkneſs and idolatry, by the conveyance of the light which Chriſtianity brought with it into Britain, ſo early as in the life time of the apoſtles themſelves,—or at furtheſt, not many years after their death.

Though this might ſeem a bleſſing conveyed and offered to us in common with other parts of the world, yet when you reflect upon this as a remote corner of the earth in reſpect of Judea,—its ſituation and inacceſſibleneſs as an iſland, the little that was then known of navigation,—or carried on of commerce,—the large tract of land which to this day remains unhallowed with the name of Chriſt, and almoſt in the neighbourhood of where the firſt glad tid-

ings of him were founded——One cannot but adore the goodneſs of God, and remark a more particular Providence in it's conveyance and eſtabliſhment here, than amongſt other nations upon the continent,—where, though the oppoſitions from error and prejudice were equal, it had not theſe natural impediments to encounter.

Hiſtorians and ſtateſmen, who generally ſearch every where for the cauſes of events, but in the pleaſure of Him who diſpoſes of them, may make different reflections upon this. They may conſider it as a matter incidental, brought to paſs by the fortuitous ambition, ſucceſs and ſettlement of the Romans here; it appearing, that in Claudius's reign, when Chriſtianity began to get footing in Rome, that near eighty thouſand of that city and people were fixed in this iſland: as this made a free communication betwixt the two places, the way for the goſpel was in courſe open, and its tranſition from the one to the other, natural and eaſy to be accounted for——and yet, nevertheleſs, providential. God often ſuffers us to purſue the devices of our hearts, whilſt he turns the courſe

of them, like the rivers of waters, to bountiful purpoſes. Thus, he might make that purſuit of glory inherent in the Romans, the engine to advance his own, and eſtabliſh it here: he might make the wickedneſs of the earth, to work his own righteouſneſs, by ſuffering them to wander a while beyond their proper bounds, till his purpoſes were fulfilled, and, *then put his hook into their noſtrils*, and lead thoſe wild beaſts of prey back again into their own land.

Next to this bleſſing of the light of the goſpel, we muſt not forget that by which it was preſerved from the danger of being totally ſmothered and extinguiſhed, by that vaſt ſwarm of barbarous nations, which came down upon us from the north, and ſhook the world like a tempeſt; changing names and cuſtoms, and language and government, and almoſt the very face of nature wherever they fixed. That our religion ſhould be preſerved at all, when every thing elſe ſeemed to periſh, which was capable of change,—or, that it ſhould not be hurt under that mighty weight of ruins, beyond the recovery of it's former beauty and ſtrength,—the whole can be aſcribed to no cauſe ſo likely

as this, That the ſame power of God which ſent it forth, was preſent to ſupport it—— when the whole frame of other things gave way.

Next in degree to this mercy of preſerving Chriſtianity from an utter extinction,—we muſt reckon that of being enabled to preſerve, and free it from the corruptions, which the ruſt of time,—the abuſes of men, and the natural tendency of all things to degeneracy, which are truſted to them, had from time to time introduced into it.

Since the day in which this reformation was began, by how many ſtrange and critical turns has it been perfected and handed down, if not, *entirely without ſpot or wrinkle*,—at leaſt, without great blotches or marks of anility.

Even the blow which was ſuffered to fall upon it ſhortly after, in that period where our hiſtory looks ſo unlike herſelf, ſtain'd, Mary, by thee, and diſfigured with blood;——can one reflect upon it, without adoring the providence of God, which ſo ſpeedily ſnatched the ſword of perſecution out of her hand,—making her reign as ſhort as it was mercileſs.

If God then made us, as he did the Iſraelites, ſuck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, how much more ſignal was his mercy in giving them to us without money, without price, in thoſe good days which followed, when a long and a wiſe reign was as neceſſary to build up our church, as a ſhort one was before to ſave it from ruins.—

—The bleſſing was neceſſary,—

—and it was granted.—

God having multiplied the years of that renowned princeſs to an uncommon number, giving her time, as well as a heart, to fix a wavering perſecuted people, and ſettle them upon ſuch foundation as muſt make them happy;

—the touch ſtone, by which they are to be tried, whom God has entruſted with the care of kingdoms.

Bleſſed be thy glorious name for ever and ever, in making that teſt ſo much eaſier for the Britiſh, than other princes of this earth; whoſe ſubjects, whatever other changes they have felt, have ſeldom happened upon that of changing their miſery, and it is to be feared, are never likely, ſo long as they are kept ſo

ſtrongly bound in chains of darkneſs,--and chains of power.

From both theſe kinds of evils, which are almoſt naturally connected together, How providential was our eſcape in the ſucceeding reign, when all the choice blood was beſpoke and preparations made to offer it up at one ſacrifice!

I would not intermix the horrors of that black projected feſtival, with the glories of this; or name the ſorrows of the next reign, which ended in the ſubverſion of our conſtitution, was it not neceſſary to purſue the thread of our deliverances through thoſe times, and remark how nigh God's providence was to us in them both, by protecting us from the one, in as ſignal a manner, as he reſtored us to the other.

Indeed the latter of them might have been a joyleſs matter of remcmberance to us at this day, had it not been confirmed a bleſſing by a ſucceeding eſcape, which ſealed and conveyed it ſafe down to us: whether it was to correct an undue ſenſe of former bleſſings,—or to teach us to reflect upon the number and value of them, by threatening us with the depravation of them, —we were ſuffered, however, to approach the

edge of the precipice, where if God had not raiſed up a deliverer to lead us back——all had been loſt:——the arts of Jeſuitry had decoyed us forwards; or if that had failed, we had been puſhed down by open force, and our deſtruction had been inevitable.

The good conſequences of that deliverance are ſuch, that it ſeemed as if God had ſuffered our waters, like thoſe of Betheſda, to be troubled, to make them afterwards more healing to us; ſince to the account of that day's bleſſing, we charge the enjoyment of every thing ſince, worth a free man's living for,—the revival of our liberty, our religion; the juſt rights of our kings,—and the juſt rights of our people,—and along with all, that happy proviſion for their continuance, for which we are returning thanks to God this day.

Let us do it, I beſeech you, in the way which becomes wiſe men, by purſuing the intentions of his bleſſings, and making a better uſe of them than our foreſathers, who ſometimes ſeemed to grow weary of their own happineſs:——let us rather thank God for the good land which he has given us; and when we begin to proſper

in it, and have built goodly houſes and dwelt therein,—and when our ſilver and our gold is multiplied, and all that we have is multiplied, let the inſtances of our virtue and benevolence be multiplied with them, that the great and mighty God, who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, may in the laſt day of accounting with us, judge us worthy of the mercies we have received.

In vain are days ſet apart to celebrate ſucceſsful occurrences, unleſs they influence a nation's morals:——a ſinful people can never be grateful to God,—nor can they, properly ſpeaking, be loyal to their prince;—they cannot be grateful to the one,—becauſe they live not under a ſenſe of his mercies,—nor can they be loyal to the other, becauſe they diſengage the Providence of God from taking his part,—and then giving a heart to his adverſaries to be intractable.——

And therefor, what was ſaid by ſome one, That every ſin was a treaſon againſt the ſoul, may be applied here,—That every wicked man is a traitor to his king and his country. And, whatever ſtateſmen may write of the cauſes of

the riſe and fall of nations;—for the contrary reaſons, a good man will ever be found to be the beſt patriot and the beſt ſubject: and though an individual may ſay, What can my righteouſneſs profit a nation of men? it may be anſwered, That if it ſhould fail of a bleſſing here, —it will have one advantage at leaſt, which is this,

It will ſave thy own ſoul; which may God grant. Amen.

SERMON VII.

The Hiſtory of JACOB, conſidered.

SERMON VII.

GENESIS xlvii. 9.

And Jacob ſaid unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage, are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.——

THERE is not a man in hiſtory, whom I pity more, than the man who made this reply——not becauſe his days were ſhort,—but that they were long enough to have crouded into them ſo much evil as we find.

Of all the patriarchs, he was the moſt unhappy: for 'bating the ſeven years he ſerved Laban for Rachael, "*which ſeemed to him but a* "*few days for the love he had to her,*"—ſtrike thoſe out of the number,—all his other days were ſorrow; and that, not from his faults, but from the ambition, the violences, and evil paſſions of others. A large portion of what man is born to, comes, you will ſay, from the

ſame quarter: it is true; but ſtill in ſome men's lives, there ſeems a contexture of miſery;—— one evil ſo riſes out of another, and the whole plan and execution of the piece has ſo very melancholy an air, that a good-natured man ſhall not be able to look upon it, but with tears on his cheeks.

I pity this patriarch ſtill the more, becauſe, from his firſt ſetting out in life, he had been led into an expectation of ſuch different ſcenes: he was told, by Iſaac his father, that *God ſhould bleſs him with the dew of heaven, and the fatneſs of the earth, and with plenty of corn and wine;—that people were to ſerve him, and nations to bow down to him;— that he ſhould be lord over his brethren;— that bleſſed was every one that bleſſed him, and curſed was every one who curſed him.*

The ſimplicity of youth takes promiſes of happineſs in the fulleſt latitude,—and as theſe were moreover confirmed to him by the God of his fathers, on his way to Padan-aram,—it would leave no diſtruſt of their accompliſhment upon his mind:—every fair and flattering object before him, which wore the face of joy,

he would regard as a portion of his bleſſing; — he would purſue it—he would graſp a ſhadow.

This, by the way, makes it neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that the bleſſings which were conveyed, had a view to bleſſings not altogether ſuch as a carnal mind would expect; but that they were in a great meaſure ſpiritual, and ſuch as the prophetic ſoul of Iſaac had principally before him, in the comprehenſive idea of their future and happy eſtabliſhment, when they were no longer to be ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth: for in fact, in the ſtrict and literal ſenſe of his father's grant,—Jacob enjoyed it not; and was ſo far from being a happy man, that in the moſt intereſting paſſages of his life, he met with nothing but diſappointments and grievous afflictions.

Let us accompany him from the firſt treacherous hour of a mother's ambition; in conſequence of which, he is driven forth from his country, and the protection of his houſe, to ſeek protection and an eſtabliſhment in the houſe of Laban his kinſman.

In what manner this anſwered his expectati-

ons, we find from his own pathetic remonſtrance to Laban, when he had purſued him ſeven day's journey, and overtook him on mount Gilead.——I ſee him in the door of the tent, with the calm courage which innocence gives the oppreſſed, thus remonſtrating to his father-in-law upon the cruelty of his treatment.

Theſe twenty years that I have been with thee, —the yews have not caſt their young, and the rams of thy flock, have I not eaten. That which was torn of beaſts, I brought not unto thee.—I bare the loſs of it; what was ſtolen by day, or ſtolen by night, of my hands didſt thou require it. Thus I was: in the day the drought conſumed me, and the froſt by night, and my ſleep departed from my eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy houſe:——I ſerved thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and ſix years for thy cattle; and thou haſt changed my wages ten times.

Scarce had he recovered from theſe evils, when the ill conduct and vices of his children, wound his ſoul to death.—— Reuben proves inceſtuous,— Judah adulterous,— his daughter Dinah is diſhonoured,—Simeon and Levi diſhonour themſelves by treachery,—two of his

grandchildren are ſtricken with ſudden death, —Rachael his beloved wife periſhes, and in circumſtances which embittered his loſs,—his ſon Joſeph, a moſt promiſing youth, is torn from him, by the envy of his brethren; and to cloſe all, himſelf driven by famine in his old age to die amongſt the Egyptians, a people who held it an abomination to eat bread with him. Unhappy patriarch! well might he ſay, *That few and evil had been his days:* the anſwer, indeed, was extended beyond the monarch's enquiry, which was ſimply his age; —but how could he look back upon the days of his pilgrimage, without thinking of the ſorrows which thoſe days had brought along with them? all that was more in the anſwer than in the demand, was the overflowings of a heart ready to bleed afreſh at the recollection of what had befallen.

Unwillingly does the mind digeſt the evils prepared for it by others;—for thoſe we prepare ourſelves,—we eat but the fruit which we have planted and watered:—a ſhattered fortune—a ſhattered frame, ſo we have but the ſatisfaction of ſhattering them ourſelves, paſs

naturally enough into the habit, and by the eaſe with which they are both done, they ſave the ſpectator a world of pity: but for thoſe like Jacob's, brought upon him by the hands from which he looked for all his comforts,—the avarice of a parent,—the unkindneſs of a relation,—the ingratitude of a child,—they are evils which leave a ſcar:——beſides, as they hang over the heads of all, and therefor may fall upon any;— every looker-on has an intereſt in the tragedy;——but then we are apt to intereſt ourſelves no otherwiſe, than merely as the incidents themſelves ſtrike our paſſions, without carrying the leſſon further:——in a word—we realize nothing:——we ſigh—we wipe away the tear,—and there ends the ſtory of miſery, and the moral with it.

Let us try to do better with this. To begin, with the bad bias which gave the whole turn to the patriarch's life,—parental partiality—or parental injuſtice,——it matters not by what title it ſtands diſtinguiſhed—it is that, by which Rebekah planted a dagger in Eſau's breaſt; and an eternal terror with it, in her own, leſt ſhe ſhould live to be deprived of

them, both in one day — and truſt me, dear Chriſtians, wherever that equal balance of kindneſs and love, which children look up to you for as their natural right, is no longer maintained—there will daggers ever be planted; *the ſon ſhall literally be ſet at variance againſt his father, and the daughter againſt her mother, and the daughter in-law againſt her mother-in-law,—and a man's foes ſhall be they of his own houſhold.*

It was an excellent ordinance, as well of domeſtic policy, as of equity, which Moſes gave upon this head, in the 21ſt of Deuteronomy.

If a man have two wives, one beloved and one hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the firſt-born ſon be hers that was hated, then it ſhall be, when he maketh his ſons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the ſon of the beloved, firſt-born, before the ſon of the hated which is indeed the firſt born,—but he ſhall acknowlege the ſon of the hated for firſt born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath. The evil was well fenced againſt——for it is one of thoſe which ſteals in upon the heart with the affections, and

courts the parent under ſo ſweet a form, that thouſands have been betrayed by the very virtues which ſhould have preſerved them. Nature tells the parent, there can be no error on the ſide of affection;——but we forget, when Nature pleads for one, ſhe pleads for every child alike — and, why is not her voice to be heard? Solomon ſays, Oppreſſion will make a wiſe man mad.——What will it do then, to a tender ingenuous heart, which feels itſelf neglected,—too full of reverence for the author of its wrongs to complain?——ſee, it ſits down in ſilence, robbed by diſcouragements, of all its natural powers to pleaſe,—born to ſee others loaded with careſſes—in ſome uncheary corner it nouriſhes it's diſcontent—and with a weight upon it's ſpirits, which it's little ſtock of fortitude is not able to withſtand,—it droops and pines away.——Sad victim of Caprice!

We are unavoidably led here into a reflection upon Jacob's conduct in regard to his ſon Joſeph, which no way correſponded with the leſſon of wiſdom, which the miſeries of his own family might have taught him: ſurely his eyes had ſeen ſorrows ſufficient on that ſcore, to

have taken warning: and yet we find, that he fell into the ſame ſnare of partiality to that child in his old age, which his mother Rebekah had ſhewn to him, in hers,—*for Iſrael loved Joſeph more than all his children; becauſe he was the ſon of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colours.*——O Iſrael! where was that prophetic ſpirit which darted itſelf into future times, and told each tribe what was to be its fate?——Where was it fled, that it could not aid thee to look ſo little a way forwards, as to behold *this coat of many colours*, ſtained with blood? Why were the tender emotions of a parent's anguiſh hid from thy eyes;——and, why is every thing?——but that it pleaſes Heaven to give us no more light in our way, than will leave virtue in poſſeſſion of it's recompence.———

——Grant me, gracious God! to go chearfully on, the road which thou haſt marked out;—I wiſh it neither more wide or more ſmooth:——continue the light of this dim taper thou haſt put into my hands:——I will kneel upon the ground ſeven times a day, to ſeek the beſt

tract I can with it——and having done that, I will truſt myſelf and the iſſue of my journey to thee, who art the fountain of joy,—and will ſing ſongs of comfort as I go along.

Let us proceed to the ſecond great occurrence in the patriarch's life.——The impoſition of a wife upon him which he neither bargain'd for or loved.——*And it came to paſs in the morning that it was Leah! and he ſaid unto Laban, What is this that thou haſt done unto me? Did I not ſerve thee for Rachael? Wherefor then haſt thou beguiled me?*

This indeed is out of the ſyſtem of all conjugal impoſitions now,—but the moral of it is ſtill good; and the abuſe, with the ſame complaint of Jacob's upon it, will ever be repeated, ſo long as art and artifice are ſo buſy as they are in theſe affairs.

Liſten, I pray you, to the ſtories of the diſappointed in marriage:——collect all their complaints:——hear their mutual reproaches; upon what fatal hinge do the greateſt part of them turn?—"They were miſtaken in the perſon."—Some diſguiſe either of body or mind is ſeen through in the firſt domeſtic ſcuffle;——

ſome fair ornament—perhaps the very one which won the heart,—*the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit*, falls off;——*It is not the Rachael for whom I have ſerved,—Why haſt thou beguiled me?*

Be open—be honeſt: give yourſelf for what you are; conceal nothing—varniſh nothing,—and if theſe fair weapons will not do,—better not conquer at all, than conquer for a day:——when the night is paſſed, it will ever be the ſame ſtory,—*And it came to paſs, behold it was Leah!*

If the heart beguiles itſelf in its choice, and imagination will give excellencies which are not the portion of fleſh and blood:——when the dream is over, and we awake in the morning, it matters little whether it is Rachael or Leah,—be the object what it will, as it muſt be on the earthly ſide, at leaſt, of perfection,—it will fall ſhort of the work of fancy, whoſe exiſtence is in the clouds.

In ſuch caſes of deception, let not man exclaim as Jacob does in his,—*What is it thou haſt done unto me?*——for it is his own doings, and

he has nothing to lay his fault on, but the heat and poetic indiſcretion of his paſſions.

I know not whether it is of any uſe, to take notice of this ſingularity in the patriarch's life, in regard to the wrong he received from Laban, which was the very wrong he had done before to his father Iſaac, when the infirmities of old age had diſabled him from diſtinguiſhing one child from another: *Art thou my very ſon Eſau? and he ſaid, I am.* It is doubtful whether Leah's veracity was put to the ſame teſt,—but both ſuffered from a ſimilitude of ſtratagem; and it is hard to ſay, whether the anguiſh, from croſſed love, in the breaſt of one brother, might not be as ſore a puniſhment, as the diſquietudes of croſſed ambition and revenge in the breaſt of the other.

I do not ſee which way the honour of Providence is concerned in repaying us exactly in our own coin,—or, why a man ſhould fall into that very pit, (and no other) which he has *graven and digged for another man:* time and chance may bring ſuch incidents about, and there wants nothing but that Jacob ſhould

have been a bad man, to have made this a common-place text for ſuch a doctrine.

It is enough for us, that the beſt way to eſcape evil, is in general, not to commit it ourſelves——and that whenever the paſſions of mankind will order it otherwiſe, to rob thoſe, at leaſt, *who love judgments*, of the triumph of finding it out,—*That our travail has returned upon our heads, and our violent dealings upon our own pates.*

I cannot conclude this diſcourſe, without returning firſt to the part with which it ſet out;——the patriarch's account to the king of Egypt, of the ſhortneſs and miſery of his days:——give me leave to bring this home to us, by a ſingle reflection upon each.

There is ſomething ſtrange in it that life ſhould appear ſo ſhort *in the groſs*,——and yet ſo long *in the detail*. Miſery may make it ſo, you will ſay—but we will exclude it,—and ſtill you will find, though we all complain of the ſhortneſs of life, what numbers there are who ſeem quite over-ſtocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually ſending out into the high ways and ſtreets of the city, to compel

gueſts to come in, and take it off their hands: to do this with ingenuity and forecaſt, is not one of the leaſt arts and buſineſs of life itſelf; and they who cannot ſucceed in it, carry as many marks of diſtreſs about them, as bankruptcy herſelf could wear. Be as careleſs as we may, we ſhall not always have the power,—nor ſhall we always be in a temper to let the account run thus. When the blood is cool'd, and the ſpirits, which have hurried us on through half our days, before we have numbered one of them, are beginning to retire;——then wiſdom will preſs a moment to be heard,—afflictions or a bed of ſickneſs will find their hours of perſuaſion——and ſhould they fail,—there is ſomething yet behind,—old age will overtake us at the laſt, and with its trembling hand, hold up the glaſs to us, as it did unto the patriarch.—

——Dear inconſiderate Chriſtians! wait not, I beſeech you, till then;—take a view of your life now:—look back, behold this fair ſpace, capable of heavenly improvements—all ſcrawled over and defaced with—

——I want words to ſay, with what—— for I think only of the reflections with which

you are to ſupport yourſelves, in the decline of a life ſo miſerably caſt away, ſhould it happen, as it often does, that ye have ſtood idle unto the eleventh hour, and have all the work of the day to perform when night comes on, and no one can work.

2dly. As to the evil of the days of the years of our pilgrimage—ſpeculation and fact appear at variance again——We agree with the patriarch, that the life of man is miſerable: and yet the world looks happy enough——and every thing tolerably at its eaſe. It muſt be noted indeed, that the patriarch, in this account, ſpeaks merely his preſent feelings, and ſeems rather to be giving a hiſtory of his ſufferings, than a ſyſtem of them, in contradiction to that of the God of love. Look upon the world he has given us,—obſerve the riches and plenty which flows in every channel, not only to ſatisfy the deſires of the temperate,—but of the fanciful and wanton——every place is almoſt a paradiſe, planted when nature was in her gayeſt humour.

——Every thing has two views. Jacob, and Job, and Solomon, gave one ſection of the

globe,—and this repreſentation another:——truth lieth betwixt—or rather, good and evil are mixed up together; which of the two preponderates, is beyond our enquiry;——but, I truſt—it is the good:———firſt, As it renders the Creator of the world more dear and venerable to me; and ſecondly, Becauſe I will not ſuppoſe, that a work intended to exalt his glory, ſhould ſtand in want of apologies.

Whatever is the proportion of miſery in this world, it is certain, that it can be no duty of religion to encreaſe the complaint,—or to affect the praiſe which the Jeſuits' college of Granado, give of their *Sanchez*,—That though he lived where there was a very ſweet garden, yet, was never ſeen to touch a flower; and that he would rather die than eat ſalt or pepper, or ought that might give a reliſh to his meat.

I pity the men whoſe natural pleaſures are burdens, and who fly from joy, (as theſe ſplenetic and moroſe ſouls do) as if it was really an evil in itſelf.

If there is an evil in this world, it is ſorrow and heavineſs of heart ——The loſs of goods,—of health,—of coronets and mitres, are only

evil, as they occaſion ſorrow;——take that out—the reſt is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man.

Poor unfortunate creature that he is! as if the cauſes of anguiſh in the heart were not enough—but he muſt fill up the meaſure, with thoſe of caprice; and not only walk in a vain ſhadow,—but diſquiet himſelf in vain too.

We are a reſtleſs ſet of beings; and as we are likely to continue ſo to the end of the world,—the beſt we can do in it, is to make the ſame uſe of this part of our character, which wiſe men do of other bad propenſities—when they cannot conquer them,—they endeavour, at leaſt, to divert them into good channels.

If therefor we muſt be a ſolicitous race of ſelf tormentors,—let us drop the common objects which make us ſo,—and for God's ſake be ſolicitous only to live well.

SERMON VIII.

The Parable of the RICH MAN and LAZARUS conſidered.

SERMON VIII.

LUKE xvi. 31.

And he ſaid unto him, if they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one ſhould riſe from the dead.

THESE words are the concluſion of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; the deſign of which was to ſhew us the neceſſity of conducting ourſelves, by ſuch lights as God had been pleaſed to give us: the ſenſe and meaning of the patriarch's final determination in the text being this, That they who will not be perſuaded to anſwer the great purpoſes of their being, upon ſuch arguments as are offered to them in ſcripture, will never be perſuaded to it by any other means, how extraordinary ſoever; — *If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one ſhould riſe from the dead.* ——

——Riſe from the dead! To what purpoſe? What would ſuch a meſſenger propoſe to urge, which had not been propoſed and urged al-

ready? the novelty or ſurpriſe of ſuch a viſit might awake the attention of a curious unthinking people, who ſpent their time in nothing elſe, but to hear and tell ſome new thing; but ere the wonder was well over, ſome new wonder would ſtart up in its room, and then the man might return to the dead from whence he came, and not a ſoul make one enquiry about him.

——This, I fear, would be the concluſion of the affair. But to bring this matter ſtill cloſer to us, let us imagine, if there is nothing unworthy in it, that God in compliance with a curious world,—or from a better motive,—in compaſſion to a ſinful one, ſhould vouchſafe to ſend one from the dead, to call home our conſcience and make us better chriſtians, better citizens, better men, and better ſervants to God than we are.

Now bear with me, I beſeech you, in framing ſuch an addreſs, as I imagine, would be moſt likely to gain our attention, and conciliate the heart to what he had to ſay: the great channel to it, is Intereſt,—and there he would ſet out.

He might tell us, (after the moſt indiſputable credentials of whom he ſerved) That he was come a meſſenger from the great God of Heaven, with reiterated propoſals, whereby much was to be granted us on his ſide,—and ſomething to be parted with on ours: but, that, not to alarm us,—it was neither houſes, nor land, nor poſſeſſions;——it was neither wives, or children, or brethren or ſiſters, which we had to forſake;——no one rational pleaſure to be given up;——no natural endearment to be torn from.———

——In a word, he would tell us, We had nothing to part with——but what was not for our intereſts to keep,—and that was our vices; which brought death and miſery to our doors.

He would go on, and prove it by a thouſand arguments, that to be temperate and chaſte, and juſt and peaceable, and charitable and kind to one another,—was only doing that for Chriſt's ſake, which was moſt for our own; and that were we in a capacity of capitulating with God upon what terms we would ſubmit to his go-

vernment,—he would convince us, it would be impoſſible for the wit of man, to frame any propoſals more for our preſent intereſts, than *to lead an uncorrupted life——to do the thing which is lawful and right*, and lay ſuch reſtraints upon our appetites as are for the honour of human nature, and the refinement of human happineſs.

When this point was made out, and the alarms from Intereſt got over,—the ſpectre might addreſs himſelf to the other paſſions:—in doing this, he could but give us the moſt engaging ideas of the perfections of God,—or could he do more, than impreſs the moſt awful ones, of his majeſty and power:——he might remind us, that we are creatures but of a day, haſtening to the place from whence we ſhall not return;——that during our ſtay, we ſtood accountable to this Being, who though rich in mercies,—yet was terrible in his judgments;—that he was about our paths, and about our beds, and ſpied out all our ways; and was ſo pure in his nature, that he would puniſh even the wicked imaginations of the heart, and had

appointed a day, wherein he would enter into his enquiry.——

He might add——

But what?——with all the eloquence of an inſpired tougue, what could he add or ſay to us, which has not been ſaid before? the experiment has been tried a thouſand times upon the hopes and fears, the reaſons and paſſions of men, by all the powers of nature,—the application of which have been ſo great, and the variety of addreſſes ſo unanſwerable, that there is not a greater paradox in the world, than that ſo good a religion ſhould be no better recommended by it's profeſſors.

The fact is, mankind are not always in a humour to be convinced,—and ſo long as the preengagement with our paſſions ſubſiſts, it is not argumentation which can do the buſineſs;—we may amuſe ourſelves with the ceremony of the operation, but we reaſon not with the proper faculty, when we ſee every thing in the ſhape and colouring, in which the treachery of the ſenſes paint it: and indeed, were we only to look into the world, and obſerve how in-

clinable men are to defend evil, as well as to commit it,—one would think, at firſt ſight, they believed, that all diſcourſes of religion and virtue were mere matters of ſpeculation, for men to entertain ſome idle hours with; and conclude very naturally, that we ſeemed to be agreed in no one thing, but ſpeaking well—and acting ill. But the trueſt comment is in the text,—*If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, etc.*

If they are not brought over to the intereſts of religion upon ſuch diſcoveries as God has made— or has enabled them to make, they will ſtand out againſt all evidence:——in vain ſhall one riſe for their conviction;——was the earth to give up her dead—it would be the ſame;——every man would return again to his courſe, and the ſame bad paſſions would produce the ſame bad actions to the end of the world.

This is the principal leſſon of the parable; but I muſt enlarge upon the whole of it—becauſe it has ſome other uſeful leſſons, and they will beſt preſent themſelves to us as we go along.

In this parable, which is one of the moſt re-

markable in the goſpel, our Saviour repreſents a ſcene, in which, by a kind of contraſt, two of the moſt oppoſite conditions that could be brought together from human life, are paſſed before our imaginations.

The one, a man exalted above the level of mankind, to the higheſt pinacle of proſperity, —to riches — to happineſs.——I ſay, *happineſs*, —in compliance with the world, and on a ſuppoſition, that the poſſeſſion of riches muſt make us happy, when the very purſuit of them ſo warms our imaginations that we ſtake both body and ſoul upon the event, as if they were things not to be purchaſed at too dear a rate. They are the wages of wiſdom,—as well as of folly.——Whatever was the caſe here, is beyond the purport of the parable; — the ſcripture is ſilent, and ſo ſhould we; it marks only his outward condition, by the common appendages of it, in the two great articles of Vanity and Appetite:——to gratify the one, he was cloathed in purple and fine linen: to ſatisfy the other,--fared ſumptuouſly every day; — and upon every thing too——we will ſuppoſe, that

climates could furniſh—that luxury could invent, or the hand of ſcience could torture.

Cloſe by his gates is repreſented an object whom Providence might ſeem to have placed there, to cure the pride of man, and ſhew him to what wretchedneſs his condition might be brought: a creature in all the ſhipwreck of nature,—helpleſs,—undone,—in want of friends, in want of health,—and in want of every thing with them which his diſtreſs called for.

In this ſtate he is deſcribed as deſiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; and though the caſe is not expreſsly put, that he was refuſed, yet as the contrary is not affirmed in the hiſtorical part of the parable, or pleaded after by the other, that he ſhewed mercy to the miſerable, we may conclude his requeſt was unſucceſsful,—like too many others in the world, either ſo high liſted up in it, that they cannot look down diſtinctly enough upon the ſufferings of their fellow creatures,—or by long ſurfeiting in a continual courſe of banqueting and good chear, they forget there is ſuch a diſtemper as hunger, in the catalogue of human infirmities.

Overcharged with this, and perhaps a thouſand unpitied wants in a pilgrimage through an inhoſpitable world, the poor man ſinks ſilently under his burden,——But, good God! whence is this? Why doeſt thou ſuffer theſe hardſhips in a world which thou haſt made? Is it for thy honour, that one man ſhould eat the bread of fulneſs, and ſo many of his own ſtock and lineage eat the bread of ſorrow?—— That this man ſhould go clad in purple, and have all his paths ſtrewed with roſe-buds of delight, whilſt ſo many mournful paſſengers go heavily along, and paſs by his gates, hanging down their heads? Is it for thy glory, O God! that ſo large a ſhade of miſery ſhould be ſpread acroſs thy works?—— or, Is it that we ſee but a part of them? When the great chain at length is let down, and all that has held the two worlds in harmony is ſeen;——when the dawn of that day approaches, in which all the diſtreſsful incidents of this Drama ſhall be unravelled;——when every man's caſe ſhall be reconſidered,— then wilt thou be fully juſtified in all thy ways, and every mouth ſhall be ſtopped.

After a long day of mercy, miſpent in riot and uncharitableneſs, the rich man *died alſo*: ——the parable adds,—and was buried;—— Buried no doubt in triumph, with all the ill timed pride of funerals, and empty decorations, which worldly folly is apt to proſtitute upon thoſe occaſions.

But this was the laſt vain ſhow; the utter concluſion of all his epicurean grandeur;—the next is a ſcene of horror, where he is repreſented by our Saviour, in a ſtate of the utmoſt miſery, from whence he is ſuppoſed to lift up his eyes towards heaven, and cry to the patriarch Abraham for mercy.

And Abraham ſaid, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedſt thy good things.——

——That he had received his good things,—it was from heaven,—and could be no reproach: with what ſeverity ſoever the ſcripture ſpeaks againſt riches, it does not appear, that the living or faring ſumptuouſly every day, was the crime objected to the rich man; or that it is a real part of a vicious character: the caſe might be then, as now: his quality and ſtation in the world might be ſuppoſed to be

ſuch, as not only to have juſtified his doing this, but, in general, to have required it without any imputation of doing wrong; for differences of ſtations there muſt be in the world, which muſt be ſupported by ſuch marks of diſtinction as cuſtom impoſes. The exceeding great plenty and magnificence, in which Solomon is deſcribed to have lived, who had ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the paſtures, and a hundred ſheep, beſides harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl, with thirty meaſures of fine flower, and threeſcore meaſures of meal, for the daily proviſion of his table; — all this is not laid to him as a ſin, but rather remarked as an inſtance of God's bleſſing to him; — and whenever theſe things are otherwiſe, it is from a waſteful and diſhoneſt perverſion of them to pernicious ends,—and oftimes, to the very oppoſite ones for which they were granted,—to glad the heart, to open it, and render it more kind.——

And this ſeems to have been the ſnare the rich man had fallen into,—and poſſibly, had he fared leſs ſumptuouſly,—he might have had more cool hours for reflection, and been better

diſpoſed to have conceived an idea of want, and to have felt compaſſion for it.

And Abraham ſaid, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedſt thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things.——Remember! ſad ſubject of recollection! that a man has paſſed through this world with all the bleſſings and advantages of it, on his ſide,—favoured by God Almighty with riches,—befriended by his fellow creatures in the means of acquiring them,—aſſiſted every hour by the ſociety of which he is a member, in the enjoyment of them—to remember, how much he has received,—how little he has beſtowed.—that he has been no man's friend,—no one's protector,—no one's benefactor,—bleſſed God!———

Thus begging in vain for himſelf, he is repreſented at laſt as interceding for his brethren, that Lazarus might be ſent to them to give them warning, and ſave them from the ruin which he had fallen into;——*They have Moſes and the prophets*, was the anſwer of the patriarch,—*let them hear them;* but the unhappy man is repreſented, as diſcontented with it; and ſtill perſiſting in his requeſt, and urging,—*Nay, fa-*

ther Abraham, but if one went from the dead they would repent.

——He thought ſo——but Abraham knew otherwiſe:——and the grounds of the determination, I have explained already, — ſo ſhall proceed to draw ſome other concluſions and leſſons from the parable,

And firſt, our Saviour might further intend to diſcover to us by it, the dangers to which great riches naturally expoſe mankind, agreeably to what is elſewhere declared, how hardly ſhall they who have them, enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The truth is, they are often too dangerous a bleſſing for God to truſt us with, or we to manage: they ſurround us at all times with eaſe, with nonſenſe, with flattery, and falſe friends, with which thouſands and ten thouſands have periſhed:——they are apt to multiply our faults, and treacherouſly to conceal them from us;——they hourly adminiſter to our temptations;——and allow us neither time to examine our faults, or humility to repent of them:——nay, what is ſtrange, do they not often tempt

men even to covetouſneſs; and though amidſt all the ill offices which riches do us, one would laſt ſuſpect this vice, but rather think the one a cure for the other; yet ſo it is, that many a man contracts his ſpirits upon the enlargement of his fortune, and is the more empty for being full.

But there is leſs need to preach againſt this: we ſeem all to be haſtening to the oppoſite extreme of luxury and expence: we generally content ourſelves with the ſolution of it; and ſay, It is a natural conſequence of trade and riches—and there it ends.

By the way, I affirm, there is a miſtake in the account; and that it is not riches which are the cauſe of luxury,—but the corrupt calculation of the world, in making riches the balance for honour, for virtue, and for every thing that is great and good, which goads ſo many thouſands on with affectation of poſſeſſing more than they have,—and conſequently of engaging in a ſyſtem of expences they cannot ſupport.

In one word, it is the neceſſity of *appearing*

to be ſomebody, in order to be ſo—which ruins the world.

This leads us to another leſſon in the parable, concerning the true uſe and application of riches; we may be ſure from the treatment of the rich man, that he did not employ thoſe talents as God intended.——

How God did intend them,—may as well be known from an appeal to your own hearts, and the inſcription you ſhall read there,—as from any chapter and verſe I might cite upon the ſubject. Let us then for a moment, my dear auditors! turn our eyes that way, and conſider the traces which even the moſt inſenſible man may have proof of, from what he may perceive ſpringing up within him from ſome caſual act of generoſity; and though this is a pleaſure which properly belongs to the good, yet let him try the experiment;—let him comfort the captive, or cover the naked with a garment, and he will feel what is meant by that moral delight ariſing in the mind from the conſcience of a humane action.

But to know it right, we muſt call upon the compaſſionate;——Cruelty gives evidence un-

willingly, and feels the pleaſure but imperfectly; for this, like all other pleaſures, is of a relative nature, and conſequently the enjoyment of it requires ſome qualification in the faculty, as much as the enjoyment of any other good does: ——there muſt be ſomething antecedent in the diſpoſition and temper which will render that good,—good to that individual; otherwiſe, though it is true it may be poſſeſſed,—yet it never can be enjoyed.

Conſider how difficult you would find it to convince a miſerly heart, that any thing is good, which is not profitable? or a libertine one, that any thing is bad, which is pleaſant?

Preach to a voluptuary, who has modelled both mind and body to no other happineſs, but good eating and drinking,—bid him *taſte and ſee how good God is:*——there is not an invitation in all nature would confound him like it.

In a word, a man's mind muſt be like your propoſition before it can be reliſhed; and it is the reſemblance between them, which brings over his judgment, and makes him an evidence on your ſide.

It is therefor not to the cruel,——it is to the

merciful;——to thoſe that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,--that we make this appeal:——it is to the generous, the kind, the humane, that I am now to tell the ſad * ſtory of the fatherleſs, of him who hath no helper, and beſpeak your alms-giving in behalf of thoſe, who know not how to aſk for it themſelves.

——What can I ſay more!——it is a ſubject on which I cannot inform your judgment, —and in ſuch an audience, I would not preſume to practiſe upon your paſſions: let it ſuffice to ſay, that they whom God hath bleſſed with the means, - and for whom he has done more, in bleſſing them likewiſe with a diſpoſition; have abundant reaſon to be thankful to him, as the author of every good gift, for the meaſure he has beſtowed to them of both: it is the refuge againſt the ſtormy wind and tempeſt, which he has planted in our hearts; and the conſtant fluctuation of every thing in this world force all the ſons and daughters of Adam to ſeek ſhelter under it by turns. Guard it by entails and ſettlements as we will, the

* Charity Sermon at St. Andrew's, Holborn.

moſt affluent plenty may be ſtripped, and find all its worldly comforts like ſo many withered leaves dropping from us;—the crowns of princes may be ſhaken; and the greateſt that ever awed the world, have looked back and moralized upon the turn of the wheel.

That which has happened to one,—may happen to every man; and therefor, that excellent rule of our Saviour, in acts of benevolence, as well as every thing elſe, ſhould govern us;—*That whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye likewiſe to them.*

Haſt thou ever laid upon the bed of languiſhing, or laboured under a diſtemper which threatened thy life? Call to mind thy ſorrowful and penſive ſpirit at that time, and ſay, What it was that made the thoughts of death ſo bitter:—if thou had'ſt children,—I affirm it, the bitterneſs of death lay there;——if unbrought up, and unprovided for, what will become of them? where will they find a friend when I am gone, who will ſtand up for them and plead their cauſe againſt the wicked?

——Bleſſed God! to thee, who art a father

to the fatherleſs, and a huſband to the widow, —I entruſt them.

Haſt thou ever ſuſtained any conſiderable ſhock in thy fortune? or, Haſt the ſcantineſs of thy condition hurried thee into great ſtraits, and brought thee almoſt to diſtraction? Conſider what was it that ſpread a table in that wilderneſs of thought,—who made thy cup to overflow? Was it not a friend of conſolation who ſtepped in,—ſaw thee embarraſſed with tender pledges of thy love, and the partner of thy cares, took them under his protection?——Heaven! thou wilt reward him for it!—and freed thee from all the terrifying apprehenſions of a parent's love.

Haſt thou———

——But how ſhall I aſk a queſtion which muſt bring tears into ſo many eyes?——Haſt thou ever been wounded in a more affecting manner ſtill, by the loſs of a moſt obliging friend,—or been torn away from the embraces of a dear and promiſing child by the ſtroke of death?——bitter rememberance! nature droops at it—but nature is the ſame in all conditions and lots of life.——A child thruſt forth in an evil hour,

without food, without raiment, bereft of inſtruction, and the means of its ſalvation, is a ſubject of more tender heart-aches, and will awaken every power of nature:—as we have felt for ourſelves,—let us feel for Chriſt's ſake—let us feel for theirs: and may the God of all comfort bleſs you. Amen.

SERMON IX.

PRIDE.

SERMON IX.

LUKE xiv. 10, 11.

But thou, when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may ſay to thee, Friend, go up higher; then ſhalt thou have worſhip in the preſence of them who ſit at meat with thee: for whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted.

IT is an exhortation of our Saviour's to Humility, addreſſed by way of inference from what he had ſaid in the three foregoing verſes of the chapter; where, upon entering the houſe of one of the chief Phariſees to eat bread, and marking how ſmall a portion of this neceſſary virtue entered in with the ſeveral gueſts, diſcovering itſelf from their chuſing the chief rooms, and moſt diſtinguiſhed places of honour;—he takes the occaſion which ſuch a behaviour offered, to caution them againſt Pride;—ſtates

the inconvenience of the paſſion;—ſhews the diſappointments which attend it;—the diſgrace in which it generally ends; in being forced, at laſt, to recede from the pretenſions to what is more than our due; which, by the way, is the very thing the paſſion is eternally promoting us to expect. When, therefor, thou art bidden to a wedding, ſays our Saviour, ſit not down in the higheſt room, leſt a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he, that bade thee and him, come and ſay to thee,—Give this man place: and thou begin with ſhame to take the loweſt room.

——But thou, when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room:——hard lecture!——in the loweſt room?——What!—do I owe nothing to myſelf? muſt I forget my ſtation, my character in life? reſign the precedence which my birth, my fortune, my talents, have already placed me in poſſeſſion of?——give all up! and ſuffer inferiors to take my honour? Yes;—for that, ſays our Saviour, is the road to it: *For when he that bade thee cometh, he will ſay to thee, Friend, go up higher; then ſhalt thou have worſhip in the preſence of them*

who ſit at meat with thee: ——for whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.

To make good the truth of which declaration, it is not neceſſary we ſhould look beyond this life, and ſay, that in that day of retribution, wherein every high thing ſhall be brought low, and every irregular paſſion dealt with as it deſerves;——that pride, amongſt the reſt, (conſidered as a vicious character) ſhall meet with it's proper puniſhment of being abaſed, and lying down for ever in ſhame and diſhonour.——It is not neceſſary we ſhould look ſo far forwards for the accompliſhment of this: the words ſeem not ſo much to imply the threat of a diſtant puniſhment, the execution of which was to be reſpited to that day;——as the declaration of a plain truth depending upon the natural courſe of things, and evidently verified in every hour's commerce in the world; from whence, as well as from our reaſoning upon the point, it is found, That Pride lays us open to ſo many mortifying encounters, which Humility in its own nature reſts ſecure from,—that verily, each of them, in this world, have their

reward faithfully dealt out by the natural workings of men's paſſions; which, though very bad executioners in general, yet are ſo far juſt ones in this, that they ſeldom ſuffer the exultations of an inſolent temper to eſcape the abaſement, or the deportment of a humble one to fail of the honour, which each of their characters do deſerve.

In other vicious exceſſes which a man commits, the world, (though it is not much to its credit) ſeems to ſtand pretty neuter: if you are extravagant or intemperate, you are looked upon as the greateſt enemy to yourſelf,—or if an enemy to the public,—at leaſt, you are ſo remote a one to each individual, that no one feels himſelf immediately concerned in your puniſhment: but in the inſtances of pride, the attack is perſonal: for as this paſſion can only take it's riſe from a ſecret compariſon, which the party has been making of himſelf to my diſadvantage, every intimation he gives me of what he thinks of the matter, is ſo far a direct injury, either as it with-holds the reſpect which is my due,—or perhaps denies me to have any; or elſe, which preſſes equally hard, as it puts

me in mind of the defects which I really have, and of which I am truly conscious, and consequently think myself the less deserving of an admonition: in every one of which cases, the proud man, in whatever language he speaks it, —if it is expressive of this superiority over me, either in the gifts of fortune, the advantages of birth or improvements, as it has proceeded from a mean estimation and possibly a very unfair one of the like pretensions in myself,—the attack, I say, is personal; and has generally the fate to be felt and resented as such.

So that with regard to the present inconveniences, there is scarce any vice, bating such as are immediately punished by laws, which a man may not indulge with more safety to himself, than this one of pride;—the humblest of men, not being so entirely void of the passion themselves, but that they suffer so much from the overflowings of it in others, as to make the literal accomplishment of the text, a common interest and concern: in which they are generally successful,--the nature of the vice being such, as not only to tempt you to it, but to afford the occasions itself of its own humiliation.

The proud man,—ſee!——he is ſore all over; touch him—you put him to pain: and though of all others, he acts as if every mortal was void of all ſenſe and feeling, yet is poſſeſſed with ſo nice and exquiſite a one himſelf, that the ſlights, the little neglects and inſtances of diſeſteem, which would be ſcarce felt by another man, are perpetually wounding him, and oft-times piercing him to his very heart.

I would not therefor be a proud man, was it only for this, that it ſhould not be in the power of every one who thought fit—to chaſtiſe me;——my other infirmities, however unworthy of me, at leaſt will not incommode me: ſo little diſcountenance do I ſee given to them, that it is not the world's fault, if I ſuffer by them:——but here—if I exalt myſelf, I have no proſpect of eſcaping;——with this vice I ſtand ſwoln up in every body's way, and muſt unavoidably be thruſt back: which ever way I turn, whatever ſtep I take under the direction of this paſſion, I preſs unkindly upon ſome one, and in return, muſt prepare myſelf for ſuch mortifying repulſes, as will bring me down, and make me go on my way ſorrowing.

This is from the nature of things, and the experience of life as far back as Solomon, whoſe obſervation upon it was the ſame,— and it will ever hold good, *that before honour was humility, and a haughty ſpirit before a fall.*—— *Put not therefor thyſelf forth in the preſence of the king, and ſtand not in the place of great men: for better is it*——(which by the way is the very diſſuaſive in the text)——*better is it, that it be ſaid unto thee, Friend, come up higher, than that thou ſhouldſt be put lower in the preſence of the prince whom thine eyes have ſeen.*

Thus much for the illuſtration of this one argument of our Saviour's againſt Pride:—— there are many other conſiderations which expoſe the weakneſs of it, which his knowlege of the heart of man might have ſuggeſted; but as the particular occaſion which gave riſe to this lecture of our Saviour's againſt pride, naturally led him to ſpeak of the mortifications which attend ſuch inſtances of it, as he then beheld: ——for this reaſon the other arguments might be omitted, which perhaps in a ſet diſcourſe would be doing injuſtice to the ſubject. I ſhall therefor, in the remaining part of this, beg

leave to offer ſome other conſiderations of a moral as well as a religious nature upon this ſubject, as ſo many inducements to check this weak paſſion in man; which, though one of the moſt inconvenient of his infirmities,—the moſt painful and diſcourteous to ſociety, yet by a ſad fatality, ſo it is, that there are few vices, except ſuch whoſe temptations are immediately ſeated in our natures, to which there is ſo general a propenſity throughout the whole race.

This had led ſome ſatirical pens to write, That all mankind at the bottom were proud alike;——that one man differed from another, not ſo much in the different portions which he poſſeſſed of it, as in the different art and addreſs by which he excells in the management and diſguiſe of it to the world: we trample, no doubt too often, upon the pride of Plato's mantle, with as great a pride of our own; yet on the whole the remark has more ſpleen than truth in it; there being thouſands, (if any evidence may be allowed) of the moſt unaffected humility, and trueſt poverty of ſpirit, which actions can give proof of. Notwithſtanding this, ſo much may be allowed to the obſervation,

That Pride is a vice which grows up in ſociety ſo inſenſibly;—ſteals in unobſerved upon the the heart upon ſo many occaſions;—forms itſelf under ſuch a variety of unſuſpected appearances,—ſometimes even under that of Humility itſelf:—in all which caſes, Self-love, like a falſe friend, inſtead of checking, moſt treacherouſly feeds this humour,——points out ſome excellence in every ſoul to make him vain, and think more highly of himſelf, than he ought to think;——that upon the whole, there is no one weakneſs into which the heart of man is more eaſily betrayed,—or which requires greater helps of good ſenſe and good principles to guard againſt.

And firſt, the root from which it ſprings, is no inconſiderable diſcredit to the fruit.

If you look into the beſt moral writers, who have taken pains lo ſearch into the grounds of this paſſion,—they will tell you, That pride is the vice of little and contracted ſouls;—that whatever affectation of greatneſs it generally wears and carries in the looks, there is always meanneſs in the heart of it:——a haughty and an abject temper, I believe, are much nearer a

kin than they will acknowlege;——like *poor* relations, they look a little ſhy at one another at firſt ſight, but trace back their pedigree, they are but collateral branches from the ſame ſtem; aud there is ſcarce any one who has not ſeen many ſuch inſtances of it, as one of our poets alludes to, in that admirable ſtroke he has given of this affinity, in his deſcription of a *Pride which licks the duſt.*

As it has *meanneſs* at the bottom of it,—ſo it is juſtly charged with having *weakneſs* there too, of which it gives the ſtrongeſt proof, in regard to the chief end it has in view, and the abſurd means it takes to bring it about.

Conſider a moment,—What is it the proud man aims at?——Why,—ſuch a meaſure of reſpect and deference, as is due to his ſuperior merit, etc. etc.

Now, good ſenſe and a knowlege of the world ſhew us, that how much ſoever of theſe are due to a man, allowing he has made a right calculation,—they are ſtill dues of ſuch a nature, that they are not to be inſiſted upon: Honour and Reſpect muſt be a *free will offering:* treat them otherwiſe, and claim them

them from the world as a tax,—they are ſure to be with-held; the firſt diſcovery of ſuch an expectation diſappoints it, and prejudices your title to it for ever.

To this ſpeculative argument of it's weakneſs, it has generally the ill fate to add another of a more ſubſtantial nature, which is matter of fact; that to turn giddy upon every little exaltation, is experienced to be no leſs a mark of a *weak brain* in the figurative, than it is in the literal ſenſe of the expreſſion:—in ſober truth, it is but a ſcurvy kind of a trick (*quoties voluit Fortuna jocari*)—when Fortune, in one of her merry moods, takes a poor devil with this paſſion in his head, and mounts him up all at once as high as ſhe can get him——for it is ſure to make him play ſuch phantaſtic tricks, as to become the very fool of the comedy; and was he not a general benefactor to the world in making it merry, I know not how Spleen could be pacified during the repreſentation.

A third argument againſt Pride is the natural connection it has with vices of an unſocial aſpect: the Scripture ſeldom introduces it alone —Anger, or Strife, or Revenge, or ſome ini-

mical paſſion, is ever upon the ſtage with it; the proofs and reaſons of which I have not time to enlarge on, and therefor ſhall ſay no more upon this argument than this,—that was there no other,—yet the bad company this vice is generally found in, would be ſufficient by itſelf to engage a man to avoid it.

Thus much for the moral conſiderations upon this ſubject; a great part of which, as they illuſtrate chiefly the inconveniences of Pride in a ſocial light, may ſeem to have a greater tendency to make men guard the appearances of it, than conquer the paſſion itſelf, and root it out of their nature: to do this effectually we muſt add the arguments of religion, without which, the beſt moral diſcourſe may prove little better than a cold political lecture, taught merely to govern the paſſion ſo, as not to be injurions to a man's preſent intereſt or quiet; all which a man may learn to practiſe well enough, and yet at the ſame time be a perfect ſtranger to the beſt part of humility, which implies not a concealment of Pride, but an abſolute conqueſt over the firſt riſings of it which are felt in the heart of man.

And firſt, one of the moſt perſuaſive arguments which religion offers to this end, is that which ariſes from the ſtate and condition of ourſelves, both as to our natural and moral imperfections. It is impoſſible to reflect a moment upon this hint, but with a heart full of the humble exclamation, *O God! what is man!* ——*even a thing of nought*———a poor, infirm, miſerable, ſhort-lived creature, that paſſes away like a ſhadow, and is haſtening off the ſtage where the theatrical titles and diſtinctions, and the whole maſk of Pride which he has worn for a day, will fall off, and leave him naked as a neglected ſlave. Send forth your imagination, I beſeech you, to view the laſt ſcene of the greateſt and proudeſt who ever awed and governed the world—ſee the empty vapour diſappearing! one of the arrows of mortality ſticks faſt within him; ſee—it forces out his life, and freezes his blood and ſpirits.

——Approach his bed of ſtate——lift up the curtain—regard a moment with ſilence———

——Are theſe cold hands and pale lips, all that is left of him who was canonized by his own pride, or made a god of, by his flatterers?

O my ſoul! with what dreams haſt thou been bewitched! how haſt thou been deluded by the objects thou haſt ſo eagerly graſped at!

If this reflection from the natural imperfection of man, which he cannot remedy, does nevertheleſs ſtrike a damp upon human Pride, much more muſt the conſiderations do ſo, which ariſe from the depravations of his nature.

Survey yourſelves, my dear Chriſtians, a few moments in this light—behold a diſobedient, ungrateful, intractable and diſorderly ſet of creatures, going wrong ſeven times in a day, —acting ſometimes every hour of it againſt your own convictions—your own intereſts, and the intentions of your God, who wills and propoſes nothing but your happineſs and proſperity—what reaſon does this view furniſh you for Pride? how many does it ſuggeſt to mortify and make you aſhamed?——well might the ſon of Syrach ſay in that ſarcaſtical remark of his upon it, *That* PRIDE *was not made for man*—— for ſome purpoſes, and for ſome particular beings, the paſſion might have been ſhaped—but not for him—fancy it where you will, it is

no where ſo improper—it is in no creature ſo unbecoming—

——But why ſo cold an aſſent, to ſo inconteſted a truth?——Perhaps thou haſt reaſons to be proud:——for heaven's ſake let us hear them——Thou haſt the advantages of birth and title to boaſt of—or thou ſtandeſt in the ſunſhine of court favour——or thou haſt a large fortune——or great talents——or much learning—or nature has beſtowed her graces upon thy perſon——ſpeak—on which of theſe foundations haſt thou raiſed this fanciful ſtructure?——Let us examine them.

Thou art well born;—then truſt me, it will pollute no one drop of thy blood to be humble: humility calls no man down from his rank,—diveſts not princes of their titles; it is in life, what the *clear obſcure* is in painting; it makes the hero ſtep forth in the canvas, and detaches his figure from the group in which he would otherwiſe ſtand confounded for ever.

If thou art rich——then ſhew the greatneſs of thy fortune,—or what is better, the greatneſs of thy ſoul in the meekneſs of thy converſa-

tion; condeſcend to men of low eſtate,—ſupport the diſtreſſed, and patronize the neglected.—Be great; but let it be in conſidering riches as they are; as *talents committed to an earthen veſſel*—That thou art but the *receiver*,—and that to be obliged and be vain too,—is but the old ſoleciſm of pride and beggary, which, though they often meet,—yet ever make but an abſurd ſociety.

If thou art powerful in intereſt, and ſtandeſt deified by a ſervile tribe of dependents,—why ſhouldeſt thou be proud,—becauſe they are hungry?——Scourge me ſuch ſycophants; they have turned the heads of thouſands as well as thine.——

——But it is thy own dexterity and ſtrength which have gained thee this eminence: allow it; but art thou proud, that thou ſtandeſt in a place where thou art the mark of one man's malice, or a third man's revenge,——where good men may be ready to ſuſpect thee, and whence bad men will be ready to pull thee down. I would be proud of nothing that is uncertain: Haman was ſo, becauſe he was admitted alone to queen Eſther's banquet; and

the diſtinction raiſed him,—but it was fifty cubits higher than he ever dreamed or thought of.

Let us paſs on to the pretences of learning, etc. etc. If thou haſt a little, thou will be proud of it in courſe: if thou haſt much, and good ſenſe along with it, there will be no reaſon to diſpute againſt the paſſion: a beggarly parade of remnants is but a ſorry object of Pride at the beſt;——but more ſo, when we can cry out upon it, as the poor man did of his hatchet,—* *Alas! maſter,—for it was borrowed.*

It is treaſon to ſay the ſame of Beauty,—whatever we do of the arts and ornaments with which Pride is wont to ſet it off: the weakeſt minds are moſt caught with both; being ever glad to win attention and credit from ſmall and ſlender accidents, through diſability of purchaſing them by better means. In truth, Beauty has ſo many charms, one knows not how to ſpeak againſt it; and when it happens that a graceful figure is the habitation of a virtuous ſoul,--when the beauty of the face ſpeaks out the modeſty and humility of the mind, and the

* 2 Kings, vi. 7.

juſtneſs of the proportion raiſes our thoughts up to the art and wiſdom of the great Creator, ſomething may be allowed it,—and ſomething to the embelliſhments which ſet it off;—and yet, when the whole apology is read,—it will be found at laſt, that Beauty, like Truth, never is ſo glorious as when it goes the plaineſt.

Simplicity is the great friend to nature, and if I would be proud of any thing in this ſilly world, it ſhould be of this honeſt alliance.

Conſider what has been ſaid; and may the God of all mercies and kindneſs watch over your paſſions, and inſpire you *with all humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, patience, and long ſuffering.*—Amen.

SERMON X.

HUMILITY.

SERMON X.

MATTHEW xi. 29.

Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls.

THE great buſineſs of man, is the regulation of his ſpirit; the poſſeſſion of ſuch a frame and temper of mind, as will lead us peaceably through this world, and in the many weary ſtages of it, afford us, what we ſhall be ſure to ſtand in need of,——*Reſt unto your ſouls.*——

——Reſt unto our ſouls!——it is all we want——the end of all our wiſhes and purſuits: give us a proſpect of this, we take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermoſt parts of the earth to have it in poſſeſſion: we ſeek for it in titles, in riches and pleaſures,—climb up after it by ambition,—come down again and ſtoop for it by avarice,—try all extremes; ſtill we are gone out of the way, nor is it, till after many miſerable experiments, that we are convinced at laſt, we have been ſeeking every where for

it, but where there was a proſpect of finding it; and that is, within ourſelves, in a meek and lowly diſpoſition of heart. This, and this only will give us reſt unto our ſouls:——reſt, from thoſe turbulent and haughty paſſions which diſturb our quiet:——reſt, from the provocations and diſappointments of the world, and a train of of untold evils too long to be recounted, againſt all which this frame and preparation of mind is the beſt protection.

I beg you will go along with me in this argument. Conſider how great a ſhare of the uneaſineſſes, which take up and torment our thoughts, owe their riſe to nothing elſe, but the diſpoſitions of mind which are oppoſite to this character.

With regard to the provocations and offences, which are unavoidably happening to a man in his commerce with the world,—take it as a rule,—as a man's pride is,—ſo is always his diſpleaſure;—as the opinion of himſelf riſes,—ſo does the injury,—ſo does his reſentment: it is this which gives edge and force to the inſtrument which has ſtruck him,—and excites that heat in the wound, which renders it incurable.

See how different the caſe is, with the humble man: one half of theſe painful conflicts he actually eſcapes; the other part fall lightly on him: — he provokes no man by contempt; thruſts himſelf forward as the mark of no man's envy; ſo that he cuts off the firſt fretful occaſions of the greateſt part of theſe evils; and for thoſe in which the paſſions of others would involve him, like the humble ſhrub in the valley, gently gives way, and ſcarce feels the injury of thoſe ſtormy encounters which rend the proud cedar, and rear it up by its roots.

If you conſider it, with regard to the many diſappointments of this life, which ariſe from the hopes of bettering our condition, and advancing in the world,—the reaſoning is the ſame.

What we expect——is ever in proportion to the eſtimate made of ourſelves; when pride and ſelf-love have brought us in their account of this matter,—we find, that we are worthy of all honours—fit for all places and employments; —as our expectations riſe and multiply, ſo muſt our diſappointments with them; and there

needs nothing more, to lay the foundation of our unhappineſs, and both to make and keep us miſerable. And in truth there is nothing ſo common in life, as to ſee thouſands, who, you would ſay, had all the reaſon in the world to be at reſt, ſo torn up and diſquieted with ſorrows of this claſs, and ſo inceſſantly tortured with the diſappointments which their pride and paſſions have created for them, that though they appear to have all the ingredients of happineſs in their hands,—they can neither compound or uſe them:—how ſhould they? the goad is ever in their ſides, and ſo hurries them on from one expectation to another, as to leave them no reſt day or night.

Humility, therefor, recommends itſelf as a ſecurity againſt theſe heart-aches, which though ridiculous ſometimes in the eye of the beholder, yet are ſerious enough to the man who ſuffers them; and I believe would make no inconſiderable account in a true catalogue of the diſquietudes of mortal man: againſt theſe, I ſay, Humility is the beſt defence.

He, that is little in his own eyes, is little too in his deſires, and conſequently moderate in his

purſuit of them: like another man, he may fail in his attempts and loſe the point he aimed at, —but that is all,— he loſes not himſelf,—he loſes not his happineſs and peace of mind with it,—even the contentions of the humble man are mild and placid.——Bleſſed character! when ſuch a man is thruſt back, who does not pity him?——when he falls, who would not ſtretch out a hand to raiſe him up?

And here, I cannot help ſtopping in the midſt of this argument, to make a ſhort obſervation, which is this. When we reflect upon the character of Humility,—we are apt to think it ſtands the moſt naked and defenceleſs of all virtues whatever,—the leaſt able to ſupport it's claims againſt the inſolent antagoniſt who ſeems ready to bear him down, and all oppoſition which ſuch a temper can make.

Now, if we conſider him as ſtanding alone, —no doubt, in ſuch a caſe he will be overpowered and trampled upon by his oppoſer;—but if we conſider the meek and lowly man, as he is—fenced and guarded by the love, friendſhip and wiſhes of all mankind,—that the other ſtands alone, hated, diſcountenanced,

without one true friend or hearty well wiſher on his ſide;—when this is balanced, we ſhall have reaſon to change our opinion, and be convinced that the humble man, ſtrengthened with ſuch an alliance, is far from being ſo overmatched as at firſt ſight he may appear:—nay I believe one might venture to go further and engage for it, that in all ſuch caſes, where real fortitude and true perſonal courage were wanted, he is much more likely to give proof of it, and I would ſooner look for it in ſuch a temper than in that of his adverſary. Pride may make a man violent,—but Humility will make him firm;——and which of the two, do you think, likely to come off with honour?—he, who acts from the changeable impulſe of heated blood, and follows the uncertain motions of his pride and fury,—or the man who ſtands cool and collected in himſelf; who governs his reſentments, inſtead of being governed by them, and on every occaſion acts upon the ſteady motives of principle and duty.

But this by the way;—though in truth it falls in with the main argument; for if the obſervation is juſt, and Humility has the advan-

tages where we ſhould leaſt expect them, the argument riſes higher in behalf of thoſe which are more apparently on it's ſide.——In all which, if the humble man finds, what the proud man muſt never hope for in this world,—that is *reſt to his ſoul*,—ſo does he likewiſe meet with it from the influence ſuch a temper has upon his condition under the evils of his life, not as chargeable upon the vices of men, but as the portion of his inheritance by the appointment of God. For if, as Job ſays, we are born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards, ſurely it is he who thinks the greateſt of theſe troubles below his ſins,—and the ſmalleſt favours above his merit, that is likely to ſuffer the leaſt from the one, and enjoy the moſt from the other: it is he who poſſeſſes his ſoul in meekneſs, and keeps it ſubjected to all the iſſues of fortune, that is the fartheſt out of their reach.——No.——He blames not the ſun, though it does not ripen his vine, nor bluſters at the winds, though they bring him no profit.——If the fountain of the humble man riſes not as high as he could wiſh,—he thinks however, that it riſes as high as

it ought, and as the laws of nature ſtill do their duty, that he has no cauſe to complain againſt them.

If diſappointed of riches—he knows the providence of God is not his debtor; that though he has received leſs than others, yet as he thinks himſelf leſs than the leaſt, he has reaſon to be thankful.

If the world goes untoward with the humble man, in other reſpects,—he knows a truth which the proud man does never acknowlege, and that is, that the world was not made for him; and therefor how little ſhare ſoever he has of its advantages, he ſees an argument of content, in reflecting how little it is, that a compound of ſin, of ignorance and frailty, has grounds to expect.

A ſoul, thus turned and reſigned, is carried ſmoothly down the ſtream of providence; no temptations in his paſſage diſquiet him with deſire,—no dangers alarm him with fear: though open to all the changes and chances of others,—yet by ſeeing the juſtice of what happens, and humbly giving way to the blow,—

though he is ſmitten, he is not ſmitten like other men, or feels the ſmart which they do.

Thus much for the doctrine of Humility; let us now look towards the example of it.

It is obſerved by ſome one, that as pride was the paſſion through which ſin and miſery entered into the world, and gave our enemy the triumph of ruining our nature, that therefor the Son of God who came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt, when he entered upon the work of our reſtoration, he began at the very point where he knew we had failed; and this he did by endeavouring to bring the ſoul of man back to it's original temper of Humility; ſo that his firſt public addreſs from the Mount began with a declaration of bleſſedneſs to the poor in ſpirit,—and almoſt his laſt exhortation in the text, was to copy the fair original he had ſet them of this virtue, and *to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart.*

It is the moſt unanſwerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man,—and ſo perſuaſive and accommodated to all Chriſtians, that as much pride as there is ſtill in the world, it is not credible but that every believer muſt receive

ſome tincture of the character or bias towards it from the example of ſo great and yet ſo humble a Maſter, whoſe whole courſe of life was a particular lecture to this one virtue; and in every inſtance of it ſhewed, that he came not to ſhare the pride and glories of life, or ſwell the hopes of ambitious followers, but to caſt a damp upon them for ever, by appearing himſelf rather as a ſervant than a maſter,—coming as he continually declared, not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter; and as the Prophet had foretold in that mournful deſcription of him,—to have no form, or comelineſs, nor any beauty that they ſhould deſire him. The voluntary meanneſs of his birth,—the poverty of his life, the low offices in which it was engaged, in preaching the goſpel to the poor,—the inconveniences which attended the execution of it, in having no where to lay his head,—all ſpoke the ſame language;—that the God of truth ſhould ſubmit to the ſuſpicion of an impoſture:—his humble deportmeut under that, and a thouſand provocations of a thankleſs people, ſtill raiſes his character higher; and what exalts it to its higheſt pitch,—the tender and pathetic

proof he gave of the ſame diſpoſition at the concluſion and great cataſtrophe of his ſuffering, —when a life full of ſo many inſtances of humility was crowned with the moſt endearing one *of humbling himſelf even to the death of the croſs*;—the death of a ſlave,—a malefactor,—dragged to *Calvary* without oppoſition,—inſulted without complaint.——

—Bleſſed Jeſus! how can the man who calls upon thy name, but learn of thee to be meek and lowly in heart?——how can he but profit when ſuch a leſſon was ſeconded by ſuch an example!

If humility ſhines ſo bright in the character of Chriſt, ſo does it in that of his religion; the true ſpirit of which tends all the ſame way.——Chriſtianity, when rightly explained and practiſed, is all meekneſs and candour, and love and courteſy; and there is no one paſſion our Saviour rebukes ſo often, or with ſo much ſharpneſs, as that one, which is ſubverſive of theſe kind effects,—and that is pride, which in proportion as it governs us, neceſſarily leads us on to a diſcourteous opinion

and treatment of others.——I ſay *neceſſarily*,—becauſe it is a natural conſequence, and the progreſs from the one to the other is unavoidable.

This our Saviour often remarks in the character of the Phariſees:—— they truſted in themſelves,—it was no wonder then they deſpiſed others.

This, I believe, might principally relate to ſpiritual pride, which by the way is the worſt of all prides; and as it is a very bad ſpecies of a very bad paſſion, I cannot do better than conclude the diſcourſe with ſome remarks upon it.

In moſt conceits of a religious ſuperiority, there has uſually gone hand in hand with it, another fancy,—which,—I ſuppoſe has fed it;—— and that is, a perſuaſion of ſome more than ordinary aids and illuminations from above.—Let us examine this matter.

That the influence and aſſiſtance of God's Spirit in a way imperceptible to us, does enable us to render him an acceptable ſervice, we learn from ſcripture:—in what particular manner this is effected, ſo that the act ſhall ſtill be imputed ours—— the ſcripture ſays not: we know only the account is ſo; but as for any ſenſible

demonſtrations of it's workings to be felt as ſuch within us——the word of God is utterly ſilent; nor can that ſilence be ſupplied by any experience.——We have none; unleſs you call the falſe pretences to it ſuch,—ſuggeſted by an enthuſiaſtic or diſtempered fancy. As expreſsly as we are told and pray for the inſpiration of God's Spirit,—there are no boundaries fixed, nor can any be ever marked to diſtinguiſh them from the efforts and determinations of our own reaſon: and as firmly as moſt Chriſtians believe the effects of them upon their hearts, I may even venture to affirm, that ſince the promiſes were made, there never was a chriſtian of a cool head and ſound judgment, that in any inſtance of a change of life, would preſume to ſay, which part of his reformation was owing to divine help,—or which to the operations of his own mind; or who, upon looking back, would pretend to ſtrike the line, and ſay, "here it "was that my own reflections ended;"—and at this point the ſuggeſtions of the Spirit of God began to take place?

However backwards the world has been in former ages in the diſcovery of ſuch points as

God never meant us to know,—we have been more ſucceſsful in our days:——thouſands can trace out now the impreſſions of this divine intercourſe in themſelves, from the firſt moment they received it, and with ſuch diſtinct intelligence of it's progreſs and workings, as to require no evidence of it's truth.

It muſt be owned, that the preſent age has not altogether the honour of this diſcovery;—when the *in-comings*, *in-dwellings*, and *outlettings* of the Spirit, were the ſubjects of ſo much edification; and when, as they do now, the moſt illiterate mechanics, who as a witty divine ſaid of them, were much fitter to *make* a pulpit, than get into one,—were yet able ſo to frame their nonſenſe to the nonſenſe of the times, as to beget an opinion in their followers, not only that they prayed and preached by inſpiration, but that the moſt common actions of their lives were ſet about in the Spirit of the Lord.

The tenets of the Quakers (a harmleſs quiet people) are collateral deſcendents from the ſame enthuſiaſtic original; and their accounts and way of reaſoning upon the inward light and

ſpiritual worſhip, are much the ſame; which laſt they carry thus much farther, as to believe the Holy Ghoſt comes down upon their aſſemblies, and *moves* them without regard to condition or ſex, to make interceſſions with unutterable groans.———

So that in fact, the opinions of Methodiſts, upon which I was firſt entering, is but a republication with ſome alterations of the ſame extravagant conceits; and as enthuſiaſm generally ſpeaks the ſame language in all ages, it is but too ſadly verified in this: for though we have not yet got to the old terms of the incomings and in-dwellings of the Spirit,—yet we have arrived to the firſt feelings of its enterance, recorded with as particular an exactneſs, as an act of filiation,—ſo that numbers will tell you the identical place,—the day of the month, and the hour of the night, when the Spirit came in upon them, and took poſſeſſion of their hearts.

Now there is this inconvenience on our ſide, That there is no arguing with a frenzy of this kind; for unleſs a repreſentation of the caſe be a confutation of it's folly to them; they muſt

for ever be led captive by a deluſion, from which no reaſoner can redeem them: for if you ſhould enquire upon what evidence ſo ſtrange a perſuaſion is grounded?——they will tell you, "They feel it ſo."——If you reply, That this is no conviction to you, who do not feel it like them, and therefor would wiſh to be ſatisfied by what tokens they are able to diſtinguiſh ſuch emotions from thoſe of fancy and complexion? they will anſwer, That the manner of it is incommunicable by human language,—but it is a matter of fact,—they feel its operations as plain and diſtinct, as the natural ſenſations of pleaſure, or the pains of a diſordered body.—And ſince I have mentioned a diſordered body, I cannot help ſuggeſting, that amongſt the more ſerious and deluded of this ſect, it is much to be doubted whether a diſordered body has not as oft times as great a ſhare in letting in theſe conceits, as a diſordered mind.

When a poor diſconſolated drooping creature is terrified from all enjoyment,—prays without ceaſing, 'till his imagination is heated,—faſts and mortifies and mopes, till his body is in as bad a plight as his mind; is it a wonder,

that the mechanical diſturbances and conflicts of an empty belly, interpreted by an empty head, ſhould be miſtook for workings of a different kind from what they are,—or that in ſuch a ſituation, where the mind ſits upon the watch for extraordinary occurrences, and the imagination is pre-engaged on its ſide, is it ſtrange if every commotion ſhould help to fix him in this malady, and make him a fitter ſubject for the treatment of a Phyſician than a Divine?

In many caſes, they ſeem ſo much above the ſkill of either, that unleſs God in his mercy rebuke this lying ſpirit, and call it back, it may go on and perſuade millions to their deſtruction.———

SERMON XI.

Advantages of CHRISTIANITY to the world.

SERMON XI.

ROMANS i. 22.

Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools.

THERE is no one project to which the whole race of mankind is ſo univerſally a bubble, as to that of being thought Wiſe; and the affectation of it is ſo viſible, in men of all complexions, that you every day ſee ſome one or other ſo very ſolicitous to eſtabliſh the character, as not to allow himſelf leiſure to do the things which fairly win it;—expending more art and ſtratagem to appear ſo in the eyes of the world, than what would ſuffice to make him ſo in truth.

It is owing to the force of this deſire, that you ſee in general, there is no injury touches a man ſo ſenſibly, as an inſult upon his parts and capacity: tell a man of other defects, that he wants learning, induſtry, or application,—he will hear your reproof with patience.——Nay

you may go farther: take him in a proper ſeaſon, you may tax his morals, — you may tell him he is irregular in his conduct,—paſſionate or revengeful in his nature,—looſe in his principles; —deliver it with the gentleneſs of a friend,—poſſibly he will not only bear with you, —but, if ingenuous, he will thank you for your lecture and promiſe a reformation; —but hint, --hint but at a defect in his intellectuals,—touch but that ſore place,—from that moment you are looked up as an enemy ſent to torment him before his time, and in return may reckon upon his reſentment and ill-will for ever; ſo that in general you will find it ſafer to tell a man, he is a knave than a fool,—and ſtand a better chance of being forgiven, for proving he has been wanting in a point of common honeſty, than a point of common ſenſe.

Strange ſouls that we are! as if to live well was not the greateſt argument of Wiſdom;—and, as if what reflected upon our morals, did not moſt of all reflect upon our underſtandings!

This, however, is a reflection we make a ſhift to overlook in the heat of this purſuit; and though we all covet this great character of

Wiſdom, there is ſcarce any point wherein we betray more folly than in our judgments concerning it; rarely bringing this precious ore either to the teſt or the balance; and though it is of the laſt conſequence not to be deceived in it,—we generally take it upon truſt,—ſeldom ſuſpect the quality, but never the quantity of what has fallen to our lot. So that however inconſiſtent a man ſhall be in his opinions of this, and what abſurd meaſures ſoever he takes in conſequence of it, in the conduct of his life,—he ſtill ſpeaks comfort to his ſoul; and like Solomon, when he had leaſt pretence for it,—in the midſt of his nonſenſe will cry out and ſay,—*That all my wiſdom remaineth with me.*

Where then is wiſdom to be found? and where is the place of underſtanding?

The politicians of the world, *profeſſing themſelves wiſe*,—admit of no other claims of wiſdom but the knowlege of men and buſineſs, the underſtanding the intereſts of ſtates,—the intrigues of courts,—the finding out the paſſions and weakneſſes of foreign miniſters,—and turning them and all events to their country's glory and advantage.——

——Not ſo the little man of this world, who thinks the main point of wiſdom, is to take care of himſelf;—to be wiſe in his generation;—to make uſe of the opportunity whilſt he has it, of raiſing a fortune, and heraldizing a name.——Far wide is the ſpeculative and ſtudious man (whoſe office is in the clouds) from ſuch little ideas:——wiſdom dwells with him in finding out the ſecrets of nature;——ſounding the depths of arts and ſciences;——meaſuring the heavens; telling the number of the ſtars, and calling them all by their names: ſo that when in our buſy imaginations we have built and unbuilt again *God's ſtories in the heavens*, ——and fancy we have found out the point whereon to fix the foundations of the earth; and in the language of the book of Job, have ſearched out the corner-ſtone thereof, we think our titles to wiſdom built upon the ſame baſis with thoſe of our knowlege, and that they will continue for ever.

The miſtake of theſe pretenders, is ſhewn at large by the Apoſtle in the chapter from which the text is taken,—*Profeſſing themſelves* WISE, —in which expreſſion (by the way) St. Paul is

thought to allude to the vanity of the Greeks and Romans, who being great encouragers of arts and learning, which they had carried to extraordinary heights, conſidered all other nations as *Barbarians*, in reſpect of themſelves; and amongſt whom, particularly the Greeks, the men of ſtudy and enquiry, had aſſumed to themſelves, with great indecorum, the title of the Wiſe Men.

With what parade and oſtentation ſoever this was made out, it had the fate to be attended with one of the moſt mortifying abatements which could happen to wiſdom; and that was an ignorance of thoſe points which moſt concerned man to know.

This he ſhews from the general ſtate of the gentile world, in the great article of their miſconceptions of the Deity——and, as wrong notions produce wrong actions,—of the duties and ſervices they owed to him, and in courſe of what they owed to one another.

For though, as he argues in the foregoing verſes, —*The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world might be clearly ſeen and underſtood, by the things that are made;*——that

is,—Though God, by the cleareſt diſcovery of himſelf, had ever laid before mankind ſuch evident proofs of his eternal Being,—his infinite powers and perfections, ſo that what is to be known of his inviſible nature, might all along be traced by the marks of his goodneſs,—and the viſible frame and order of the world:——yet ſo utterly were they without excuſe,—that though they knew God, and ſaw his image and ſuperſcription in every part of his works,—*yet they glorified him not.*——So bad a uſe did they make of the powers given them from this great diſcovery, that inſtead of adoring the Being thus manifeſted to them, in purity and truth, they fell into the moſt groſs and abſurd deluſions;——*changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible men,—to birds,—to fourfooted beaſts, and creeping things;*——*Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe,—they became fools.*——All their ſpecious wiſdom was but a more glittering kind of ignorance, and ended in the moſt diſhonourable of all miſtakes,—in ſetting up fictitious gods, to receive the tribute of their adoration and thanks,

The fountain of religion being thus poiſon-

ed,—no wonder the ſtream ſhewed it's effects, which are charged upon them in the following words, where he deſcribes the heathen world *as full of all unrighteouſneſs*,—fornication,—covetouſneſs,—maliciouſneſs,—full of murder,—envy,—debate,—malignity,—whiſperers,—backbiters,—haters of God,—proud,—boaſters,—inventors of evil things,—diſobedient to parents,—without underſtanding, without natural affection,—implacable,—unmerciful!—God in heaven defend us from ſuch a catalogue!

But theſe diſorders, if fairly conſidered, you will ſay, have in no ages ariſen ſo much from want of light, as a want of diſpoſition to follow the light which God has ever imparted: that the law, written in their hearts, was clear and expreſs enough for any reaſonable creatures, and would have directed them, had they not ſuffered their paſſions more forcibly to direct them otherwiſe: that if we are to judge from this effect, namely the corruption of the world, the ſame prejudice will recur even againſt the Chriſtian religion; ſince mankind have at leaſt been as wicked in later days, as in

the more remote and ſimple ages of the world: and that, if we may truſt to facts, there are no vices which the apoſtle fixes upon the heathen world, before the preaching of the goſpel, which may not be paralleled by as black a catalogue of vices in the Chriſtian world ſince.

This neceſſarily brings us to an enquiry, Whether Chriſtianity has done the world any ſervice?——and, How far the morals of it have been embraced?

In litigating this, one might oppoſe facts to the end of the world, without coming one jot nearer the point. Let us ſee how far their miſtakes concerning the Deity will throw light upon the ſubject.

That there was one ſupreme Being who made this world, and who ought to be worſhipped by his creatures, is the foundation of all religion, and ſo obvious a truth in nature,—that Reaſon, as the Apoſtle acknowleges, was always able to diſcover it: and yet it ſeems ſtrange, that the ſame faculty, which made the diſcovery, ſhould be ſo little able to keep true to its own judgment, and ſupport it long againſt the

prejudices of wrong heads, and the propenſity of weak ones, towards idolatry and a multiplicity of gods.

For want of ſomething to have gone hand in hand with reaſon, and fixed the perſuaſion for ever upon their minds, that there was in truth but one God, the Maker and ſupporter of heaven and earth,—infinite in wiſdom, and knowlege, and all perfections;——how ſoon was this ſimple idea loſt, and mankind led to diſpoſe of theſe attributes inherent in the Godhead, and divide and ſubdivide them again amongſt deities, which their own dreams had given ſubſtance to!——his eternal power and dominion parcell'd out to gods of the land,—to gods of the ſea,—to gods of the infernal regions; whilſt the great GOD of gods, and LORD of lords, who ruleth over all the kingdoms of the world,—who is ſo great that nought is able to controul or withſtand his power, was ſuppoſed to reſt contented with his allotment, and to want power to act within ſuch parts of his empire, as they diſmembered and aſſigned to others!

If the number of their gods and this partition

of their power, would leſſen the idea of their majeſty, What muſt be the opinions of their origin? When inſtead of that glorious deſcription, which Scripture gives of "The Ancient "of Days, who inhabiteth eternity,"——they gravely aſſigned particular times and places for the births and education of their gods; ſo that there was ſcarce a hamlet or even a deſert in Greece or Italy, which was not rendered memorable by ſome favour or accident of this kind.

And what rendered ſuch conceits the more groſs and abſurd,——they ſuppoſed not only that the gods they worſhipped had a beginning, but that they were produced by fleſhly parents, and accordingly, they attributed to them corporeal ſhapes and difference of ſex: and indeed in this they were a little conſiſtent, for their deities ſeemed to partake ſo much of the frailties to which fleſh and blood is ſubject, that their hiſtory and their pedigree were much of a piece, and might reaſonably claim each other. For they imputed to them not only the human defects of ignorance, want, fear, and the like, but the moſt unmanly ſenſualities, and

what would be a reproach to human nature,—ſuch as cruelty, adulteries, rapes, inceſts; and even in the accounts which we have from the ſublimeſt of their poets,—what are they, but anecdotes of their ſquabbles amongſt themſelves, their intrigues, their jealouſies, their ungovernable tranſports of choler,—nay even their thefts,—their drunkenneſs, and blood-ſhed?

Here let us ſtop a moment and enquire, what was Reaſon doing all this time, to be ſo miſerably inſulted and abuſed? Where held ſhe her empire, whilſt her bulwarks were thus born down, and her firſt principles of religion and truth lay buried under them? If ſhe was able by herſelf to regain the power ſhe had loſt, and put a ſtop to this folly and confuſion,—why did ſhe not? If ſhe was not able to reſiſt this torrent alone,—the point is given up—ſhe wanted aid; and revelation has given it.

But though reaſon, you will ſay, could not overthrow theſe popular miſtakes,—yet it ſaw the folly of them, and was at all times able to diſprove them.

No doubt it was; and it is certain too, that the more diligent enquirers after truth did not

in fact fall into these absurd notions, which by the way is an observation more to our purpose than theirs, who usually make it, and shews that though their reasonings were good, that there always wanted something which they could not supply to give them some weight, as would lay an obligation upon mankind to embrace them, and make that to be a law, which otherwise was but an opinion without force.

Besides,—which is a more direct answer,—though it is true, the ablest men give no credit to the multiplicity of gods,—(for they had a religion for themselves, and another for the populace) yet they were guilty of what in effect was equally bad, in holding an opinion which necessarily supported these very mistakes,—namely, that as different nations had different gods, it was every man's duty (I suppose more for quietness than principle's sake) to worship the gods of his country; which by the way, considering their numbers, was not so easy a task,—for what with celestial gods, and gods aerial, terrestrial and infernal, with the goddesses, their wives and mistresses, upon the lowest computation, the heathen world ac-

knowleged no leſs than thirty thouſand deities, all which claimed the rites and ceremonies of religious worſhip.

But, it will be ſaid, allowing the bulk of mankind were under ſuch deluſions,—they were ſtill but ſpeculative.——What was that to their practice? however defective in their theology and more abſtracted points,—their morality was no way connected with it.——There was no need, that the everlaſting laws of juſtice and mercy ſhould be fetched down from above,—ſince they can be proved from more obvious mediums;——they were as neceſſary for the ſame good purpoſes of ſociety then as now; and we may preſume they ſaw their intereſt and purſued it.

That the neceſſities of ſociety, and the impoſſibilities of its ſubſiſting otherwiſe, would point out the convenience, or if you will,—the duty of ſocial virtues, is unqueſtionable:—— but I firmly deny, that therefor religion and morality are independent of each other: they appear ſo far from it, that I cannot conceive how the one, in the true and meritorious ſenſe of the duty, can act without the influence of

the other: ſurely the moſt exalted motive which can only be depended upon for the uniform practice of virtue,—muſt come down from *above*,—from the love and imitation of the goodneſs of that Being, in whoſe ſight we wiſh to render ourſelves acceptable: this will operate at all times and all places,—in the darkeſt cloſet as much as on the greateſt and moſt public theatres of the world.

But with different conceptions of the Deity, or ſuch impure ones as they entertained, is it to be doubted whether in the many ſecret trials of our virtue, we ſhould not determine our caſes of conſcience with much the ſame kind of caſuiſtry, as that of the Libertine of Terence, who being engaged in a very unjuſtifiable purſuit, and happening to ſee a picture which repreſented a known ſtory of Jupiter in a like tranſaction,—argued the matter thus within himſelf.——If the great Jupiter could not reſtrain his appetites, and deny himſelf an indulgence of this kind,—*ego Homuncio, hoc non facerem?* ſhall I a mortal,—an inconſiderable mortal too, cloath'd with infirmities of fleſh and blood,—pretend to a virtue, which the Fa-

ther of Gods and men could not? What inſolence!

The concluſion was natural enough; and as ſo great a maſter of nature puts it into the mouth of one of his principal characters, no doubt the language was then underſtood; it was copied from common life, and was not the firſt application which had been made of the ſtory.

It will ſcarce admit of a queſtion, whether vice will not naturally grow bold upon the credit of ſuch an example; or whether ſuch impreſſions did not influence the lives and morals of many in the heathen world; and had there been no other proof of it but the natural tendency of ſuch notions to corrupt them, it had been ſufficient reaſon to believe it was ſo.

No doubt, there is ſufficient room for amendment in the chriſtian world, and we may be ſaid to be a very corrupt and bad generation of men, conſidering what motives we have from the purity of our religion, and the force of it's ſanctions to make us better:——yet ſtill I affirm, if theſe reſtraints were taken off, the world

would be infinitely worſe: and though ſome ſenſe of morality might be preſerved, as it was in the heathen world, with the more conſiderate of us, yet in general I am perſuaded, that the bulk of mankind, upon ſuch a ſuppoſition, would ſoon come to *live without* GOD *in the world*, and in a ſhort time differ from Indians themſelves in little elſe but their complexions.

If after all, the chriſtian religion has not left a ſufficient proviſion againſt the wickedneſs of the world,—the ſhort and true anſwer is this, That there can be none.

It is ſufficient to leave us without excuſe, that the excellency of this inſtitution in its doctrine, its precepts, and its examples, has a proper tendency to make us a virtuous and a happy people;——every page is an addreſs to our hearts to win them to thoſe purpoſes;—— but as religion was not intended to work upon men by force and natural neceſſity, but by moral perſuaſion, which ſets good and evil before them,—ſo that if men have power to do the evil and chuſe the good,—and will abuſe it,— this cannot be avoided.—Religion ever im-

plies a freedom of choice, and all the beings in the world which have it, were created free to ſtand and free to fall;——and therefor men who will not be perſuaded by this way of addreſs, muſt expect, and be contented to be reckoned with according to the talents they have received.

SERMON XII.

The ABUSES of CONSCIENCE considered.

ADVERTISEMENT.

AS the following Sermon upon Abuſes of Conſcience, has already appeared in the body of a moral work, more read than underſtood, the Editor begs pardon of thoſe who have purchaſed it in that ſhape; and this alſo, for being made to pay twice actually for the ſame thing.

——The caſe is common: but it was judged that ſome might better like it, and others better underſtand it juſt as it was preached, than with the breaks and interruptions given to the ſenſe and argument as it ſtands there offered to the world.

It was an Aſſize Sermon, preached in the Cathedral Church at York, and wrote by the ſame hand with the others in theſe two volumes, and as they are probably the laſt (except the ſweepings of the Author's ſtudy after his death) that will be publiſhed, it was thought fit to add it to the collection,—where moreover it ſtands

a chance of being read by many grave people with a much ſafer conſcience.

All the Editor wiſhes, is, That this may not, after all, be one of thoſe many abuſes of it ſet forth in what he is now going to read.

SERMON XII.

HEBREWS xiii. 18.

—For we truſt we have a good Conſcience.——

TRUST!——Truſt we have a good Conſcience!——Surely, you will ſay, if there is any thing in this life which a man may depend upon, and to the knowlege of which he is capable of arriving upon the moſt indiſputable evidence, it muſt be this very thing,—Whether he has a good Conſcience, or no.

If a man thinks at all, he cannot well be a ſtranger to the true ſtate of this account;——He muſt be privy to his own thoughts and deſires——He muſt remember his paſt purſuits, and know certainly the true ſprings and motives, which, in general, have governed the actions of his life,

In other matters we may be deceived by falſe appearances; and as the wiſe man complains, *Hardly do we gueſs aright at the things that are*

upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us:——but here the mind has all the evidence and facts within herſelf:——is conſcious of the web ſhe has wove:——knows its texture and fineneſs, and the exact ſhare which every paſſion has had in working upon the ſeveral deſigns, which virtue or vice has plann'd before her.

Now,——as Conſcience is nothing elſe but the knowlege which the mind has within itſelf of this; and the judgment, either of approbation or cenſure, which it unavoidably makes upon the ſucceſſive actions of our lives,—it is plain, you will ſay, from the very terms of the propoſition, whenever this inward teſtimony goes againſt a man, and he ſtands ſelf-accuſed,—that he muſt neceſſarily be a *guilty man*. And, on the contrary, when the report is favourable on his ſide, and his heart condemns him not,—that it is not a matter of *truſt*, as the Apoſtle intimates, but a matter of certainty and fact, that the *Conſcience* is *good*, and that the *man* muſt be *good* alſo.

At firſt ſight, this may ſeem to be the true ſtate of the caſe; and I make no doubt but the

knowlege of right and wrong is truly impreſs'd upon the mind of man; that, did no ſuch thing ever happen, as that the conſcience of a man, by long habits of ſin, might (as the Scripture aſſures us, it may) inſenſibly become hard; and, like ſome tender parts of his body, by much ſtreſs, and continual hard uſage, loſe, by degrees, that nice ſenſe and perception with which God and nature endowed it:——did this never happen:——or was it certain that ſelf-love could never hang the leaſt bias upon the judgment: or that the little intereſts below could riſe up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions, and encompaſs them about with clouds and thick darkneſs:——could no ſuch thing as favour and affection enter this ſacred court:——did WIT diſdain to take a bribe in it, or was aſhamed to ſhew its face as an advocate for an unwarantable enjoyment:——or, laſtly, were we aſſured that INTEREST ſtood always unconcerned whilſt the cauſe was hearing,—and that PRSSION never got into the judgment-ſeat, and pronounced ſentence in the ſtead of reaſon, which is ſuppoſed always to preſide and determine upon the caſe:——was

this truly ſo, as the objection muſt ſuppoſe, no doubt, then, the religious and moral ſtate of a man would be exactly what he himſelf eſteemed it; and the guilt or innocence of every man's life could be known, in general, by no better meaſure, than the decrees of his own approbation or cenſure.

I own, in one caſe, whenever a man's Conſcience does accuſe him (as it ſeldom errs on that ſide) that he is guilty; and, unleſs in melancholy and hypochondriac caſes, we may ſafely pronounce that there is always ſufficient grounds for the accuſation.

But, the converſe of the propoſition will not hold true,—namely, That wherever there is guilt, the Conſcience muſt accuſe; and, if it does not, that a man is therefore innocent.—This is a fact:—ſo that the common conſolation which ſome good chriſtian or other is hourly adminiſtering to himſelf,—That he thanks God, his mind does not miſgive him; and that, conſequently, he has a good Conſcience, becauſe he has a quiet one—As current as the inference is, and as infallible as the rule appears at firſt ſight, yet, when you look nearer to it,

and try the truth of this rule upon plain facts, you find it liable to ſo much error, from a falſe application of it:—the principle on which it goes ſo often perverted:—the whole force of it loſt, and ſometimes ſo vilely caſt away, that it is painful to produce the common examples from human life, which confirm this account.

A man ſhall be vicious and utterly debauched in his principles; exceptionable in his conduct to the world: ſhall live ſhameleſs,—in the open commiſſion of a ſin which no reaſon or pretence can juſtify;—a ſin, by which, contrary to all the workings of humanity within, he ſhall ruin forever the deluded partner of his guilt;—rob her of her beſt dowry;—and not only cover her own head with diſhonour, but involve a whole virtuous family in ſhame and ſorrow for her ſake. Surely,—you will think, conſcience muſt lead ſuch a man a troubleſome life:——he can have no reſt night or day from its reproaches.

Alas! Conſcience had ſomething elſe to do all this time than break in upon him: as Elijah reproached the god *Baal*, this *domeſtic God*, was either *talking*, *or purſuing*, *or was in a*

journey, or, peradventure he ſlept and could not be awoke. Perhaps he was gone out in company, with HONOUR, to fight a duel;—to pay off ſome debt at play: —or dirty annuity, the bargain of his luſt.——Perhaps, Conſcience all this time was engaged at home, talking aloud againſt petty larceny, and executing vengeance upon ſome ſuch puny crimes as his fortune and rank, in life, ſecured him againſt all temptation of committing: — ſo that he lives as merrily, —ſleeps as ſoundly in his bed;—and, at laſt, meets death with as much unconcern,—perhaps, much more ſo than a much better man.

Another is ſordid, unmerciful;—a ſtrait-hearted, ſelfiſh wretch, incapable either of private friendſhips, or public ſpirit.——Take notice how he paſſes by the widow and orphan in their diſtreſs; and ſees all the miſeries incident to human life without a ſigh or a prayer.——Shall not Conſcience riſe up and ſting him on ſuch occaſions? No.——Thank God there is no occaſion. 'I pay every man his own,—I have 'no fornication to anſwer to my conſcience, no 'faithleſs vows or promiſes to make up, I have 'debauched no man's wife or child.——Thank

'God I am not as other men, adulterers, un-
'juſt, or even as this libertine who ſtands be-
'fore me.'

A third is crafty and deſigning in his nature. ——View his whole life,—it is nothing elſe but a cunning contexture of dark arts and unequitable ſubterfuges baſely to defeat the true intent of all laws, plain dealing, and the ſafe enjoyment of our ſeveral properties——You will ſee ſuch a one, working out a frame of little deſigns upon the ignorance and perplexities of the poor and needy man:——ſhall raiſe a fortune upon the inexperience of a youth,—or the unſuſpecting temper of his friend, who would have truſted him with his life. When old age comes on, and repentance calls him to look back upon this black account, and ſtate it over again with his Conſcience——Conſcience looks into the *Statutes at Large*,—finds perhaps no *expreſs law* broken by what he has done;——perceives no penalty or forfeiture incurred;——ſees no ſcourge waving over his head,—or priſon opening its gate upon him.——What is there to affright his Conſcience?——Conſcience has got ſafely entrenched behind the letter of

the law, ſits there invulnerable, fortified with *caſes* and *reports* ſo ſtrongly on all ſides,—that it is not preaching can diſpoſſeſs it of its hold.

Another ſhall want even this refuge,—ſhall break through all this ceremony of ſlow chicane; ſcorns the doubtful workings of ſecret plots and cautious trains to bring about this purpoſe.——See the bare-fac'd villain how he cheats, lyes, perjures, robs, murders,—horrid! But indeed much better was not to be expected in this caſe.——The poor man was in the dark!—His prieſt had got the keeping of his Conſcience,—and all he had let him know of it was, That he muſt believe in the *Pope;*—go to maſs;—croſs himſelf;—tell his beads;—be a good Catholic; and that this in all conſcience was enough to carry him to heaven. What?——if he perjures?——Why,—he had a mental reſervation in it. But if he is ſo wicked and abandoned a wretch as you repreſent him,—if he robs or murders, will not Conſcience, on every ſuch act, receive a wound itſelf? ——Ay——But the man has carried it to confeſſion, the wound digeſts there, and will do

well enough,—and in a ſhort time be quite healed up by abſolution.

O *Popery!* What haſt thou to anſwer for?——when not content with the too many natural and fatal ways through which the heart is every day thus treacherous to itſelf above all things,—thou haſt wilfully ſet open this wide gate of deceit before the face of this unwary *Traveller*, too apt, God knows, to go aſtray of himſelf,—and confidently ſpeak peace to his ſoul, when there is no peace.

Of this the common inſtances, which I have drawn out of life, are too notorious to require much evidence. If any man doubts the reality of them, or thinks it impoſſible for man to be ſuch a bubble to himſelf,—I muſt refer him a moment to his reflections, and ſhall then venture to truſt the appeal with his own heart. Let him conſider in how different a degree of deteſtation, numbers of wicked actions ſtand *there*, though equally bad and vicious in their own natures——he will ſoon find that ſuch of them, as ſtrong inclination or cuſtom have prompted him to commit, are generally dreſs'd

out and painted with all the falſe beauties which a ſoft and a flattering hand can give them; and that the others, to which he feels no propenſity, appear, at once, naked and deformed, ſurrounded with all the true circumſtances of folly and diſhonour.

When David ſurprized Saul ſleeping in the cave, and cut off the ſkirt of his robe,——we read, his heart ſmote him for what he had done.——But, in the matter of Uriah, where a faithful and gallant ſervant, whom he ought to have loved and honoured, fell to make way for his luſt; where *Conſcience* had ſo much greater reaſon to take the alarm,—his heart ſmote him not.——A whole year had almoſt paſſed from the firſt commiſſion of that crime—to the time Nathan was ſent to reprove him; and we read not once of the leaſt ſorrow or compunction of heart, which he teſtified during all that time, for what he had done.

Thus Conſcience, this once able monitor,—placed on high as a judge within us,—and intended, by our Maker, as a juſt and equitable one too,—by an unhappy train of cauſes and impediments,— takes often ſuch imperfect cog-

nizance of what paſſes,—does its office ſo negligently,—ſometimes ſo corruptly, that it is not to be truſted alone: and therefor, we find there is a neceſſity, an abſolute neceſſity, of joining another principle with it, to aid, if not govern its determinations.

So that if you would form a juſt judgment of what is of infinite importance to you not to be miſled in; namely, in what degree of real merit you ſtand, either as an honeſt man,—an uſeful citizen,—a faithful ſubject to your king,—or a good ſervant to your God,—call in Religion and Morality.——Look—What is written in the law of God?——How readeſt thou?——Conſult calm reaſon, and the unchangeable obligations of juſtice and truth,—What ſay they?

Let Conſcience determine the matter upon theſe reports,—and then, if *thy heart condemn thee not*,—which is the caſe the Apoſtle ſuppoſes, the rule will be infallible,—*Thou wilt have confidence towards God*;——that is, have juſt grounds to believe the judgment thou haſt paſt upon thyſelf, *is* the judgment of God; and nothing elſe but an anticipation of that righteous

ſentence, which will be pronounced, hereafter, upon thee by that BEING, before whom thou art finally to give an account of thy actions.

Bleſſed is the man, indeed, as the Author of *Eccleſiaſticus* expreſſes it, *who is not pricked with the multitude of his ſins.*——*Bleſſed is the man whoſe heart hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from his hope in the Lord. Whether he be rich*, continues he, *or whether he be poor, if he have a good heart* (a heart thus guided and informed)—*He ſhall at all times rejoice in a chearful countenance.*——*His mind ſhall tell him more than ſeven watchmen that ſit above upon a tower on high.* In the darkeſt doubts it ſhall conduct him ſafer than a thouſand Caſuiſts, and give the ſtate he lives in a better ſecurity for his behaviour, than all the clauſes and reſtrictions put together, which the wiſdom of the legiſlator is forced to multiply, —forced, I ſay, as things ſtand; human laws being not a matter of original choice, but of pure neceſſity, brought in to fence againſt the miſchievous effects of thoſe Conſciences which are no law unto themſelves: wiſely intending by the many proviſions made, That in all ſuch

corrupt or miſguided caſes, where principle and the checks of Conſcience will not make us upright,—to ſupply their force, and by the terrors of jails and halters oblige us to it.

To have the fear of God before our eyes; and, in our mutual dealings with each other, to govern our actions by the eternal meaſures of right and wrong:——the firſt of theſe will comprehend the duties of religion: the ſecond thoſe of morality; which are ſo inſeparably connected together, that you cannot divide theſe two *Tables*, even in imagination (though the attempt is often made in practice) without breaking and mutually deſtroying them both.

I ſaid the attempt is often made;—and ſo it is;—there being nothing more common than to ſee a man, who has no ſenſe at all of religion,—and indeed has *ſo much* of honeſty, as to pretend to none; who would yet take it as the bittereſt affront, ſhould you but hint at a ſuſpicion of his moral character,—or imagine he was not conſcientiouſly juſt, and ſcrupulous to the uttermoſt mite.

When there is ſome appearance that it is ſo,—though one is not willing even to ſuſpect the

appearance of ſo great a virtue, as moral honeſty; —yet were we to look into the grounds of it in the preſent caſe, I am perſuaded we ſhould find little reaſon to envy ſuch a man the honour of his motive.

Let him declaim as pompouſly as he can on the ſubject, it will be found at laſt to reſt upon no better foundation than either his intereſt, his pride, his eaſe; or ſome ſuch little and changeable paſſion, as will give us but ſmall dependance upon his actions in matters of great ſtreſs.

Give me leave to illuſtrate this by an example.

I know the banker I deal with, or the phyſician I uſually call in, to be neither of them men of much religion: I hear them make a jeſt of it every day, and treat all its ſanctions with ſo much ſcorn and contempt, as to put the matter paſt doubt. Well,—notwithſtanding this I put my fortune into the hands of the one, —and, what is dearer ſtill to me, I truſt my life to the honeſt ſkill of the other.——Now let me examine what is my reaſon for this great confidence.—— Why,—in the firſt place, I believe that there is no probability that either of them will employ the power, I put into their

hands, to my diſadvantage. I conſider that honeſty ſerves the purpoſes of this life.——I know their ſucceſs in the world depends upon the fairneſs of their characters;——that they cannot hurt me without hurting themſelves more.

But put it otherwiſe, namely, that intereſt lay for once on the other ſide.——That a caſe ſhould happen wherein the one, without ſtain to his reputation, could ſecrete my fortune, and leave me naked in the world;—— or that the other could ſend me out of it, and enjoy an eſtate by my death, without diſhonour to himſelf or his art.—— In this caſe what hold have I of either of them?——Religion, the ſtrongeſt of all motives, is out of the queſtion.—— Intereſt, the next moſt powerful motive in this world, is ſtrongly againſt me.——I have nothing left to caſt into the ſcale to balance this temptation.——I muſt lay at the mercy of honour,—or ſome ſuch capricious principle.—— Strait ſecurity! for two of my beſt and moſt valuable bleſſings,—my property and my life!

As therefor we can have no dependance upon morality without religion;—ſo, on the o-

ther hand, there is nothing better to be expected from religion without morality; nor can any man be ſuppoſed to diſcharge his duties to God, (whatever fair appearances he may hang out, that he does ſo) if he does not pay as conſcientious a regard to the duties, which he owes his fellow creature.

This is a point capable in itſelf of ſtrict demonſtration.——Nevertheleſs, it is no rarity to ſee a man whoſe real moral merit ſtands very low, who yet entertains the higheſt notion of himſelf, in the light of a devout and religious man. He ſhall not only be covetous, revengeful, implacable,—but even wanting in points of common honeſty.——Yet becauſe he talks loud againſt the infidelity of the age,—is zealous for ſome points of religion,—goes twice a day to church, attends the ſacraments,—and amuſes himſelf with a few inſtrumental duties of religion,—ſhall cheat his conſcience into a judgment that for this he is a religious man, and has diſcharged faithfully his duty to God: and you will find, that ſuch a man, through force of this deluſion, generally looks down with ſpiritual pride upon every other man who

has leſs affectation of piety, though, perhaps, ten times more moral honeſty than himſelf.

This is likewiſe a ſore evil under the ſun; and I believe there is no one miſtaken principle which, for its time, has wrought more ſerious miſchiefs. For a general proof of this, examine the hiſtory of the *Romiſh* church.——See what ſcenes of cruelty, murders, rapines, bloodſhed, have all been ſanctified by a religion not ſtrictly governed by morality.

In how many kingdoms of the world, has the cruſading ſword of this miſguided Saint-Errant ſpared neither age, or merit, or ſex, or condition.——And, as he fought under the banners of a religion, which ſet him looſe from juſtice and humanity,—he ſhewed none,—mercileſsly trampled upon both, heard neither the cries of the unfortunate, nor pitied their diſtreſſes.

If the teſtimony of paſt centuries in this matter is not ſufficient,—conſider at this inſtant, how the votaries of that religion are every day thinking to do ſervice and honour to God, by actions which are a diſhonour and ſcandal to themſelves.

To be convinced of this, go with me for a moment into the priſons of the inquiſition.—— Behold *religion* with mercy and juſtice chain'd down under her feet,—there ſitting ghaſtly upon a black tribunal, propp'd up with racks and inſtruments of torment.——Hark!—— What a piteous groan!—See the melancholy wretch who uttered it, juſt brought forth to undergo the anguiſh of a mock-trial, and endure the utmoſt pains that a ſtudied ſyſtem of *religious cruelty* has been able to invent. Behold this helpleſs victim delivered up to his tormentors. His body ſo waſted with ſorrow and long confinement, you will ſee every nerve and muſcle as it ſuffers.——Obſerve the laſt movement of that horrid engine.——What convulſions it has thrown him into.——Conſider the nature of the poſture in which he now lies ſtretched. ——What exquiſite torture he endures by it. ——It is all nature can bear.——Good God! See how it keeps his weary ſoul hanging upon his trembling lips, willing to take its leave,—— but not ſuffered to depart. Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell,—dragged out of it again to meet the flames,—and the inſults

in his laſt agonies, which this principle——this principle that there *can* be religion without morality, has prepared for him.

The ſureſt way to try the merit of any diſputed notion,—is to trace down the conſequences ſuch a notion has produced, and compare them with the *ſpirit* of chriſtianity.——It is the ſhort and deciſive rule, which our Saviour has left for theſe and ſuch like caſes,—and is worth a thouſand arguments.—*By their fruits*, ſays he, *ye ſhall know them*.

Thus religion and morality, like faſt friends and natural allies, can never be ſet at variance, without the mutual ruin and diſhonour of them both;—and however goes about this unfriendly office, is no well-wiſher to either,—and whatever he pretends, he deceives his own heart, and, I fear, his morality as well as his religion will be vain.

I will add no farther to the length of this diſcourſe, than by two or three ſhort and independent Rules, deducible from what has been ſaid.

1ſt. Whenever a man talks loudly againſt religion, always ſuſpect that it is not his reaſon

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1ſt. Whenever a man talks loudly againſt religion, always ſuſpect that it is not his reaſon

but his paſſions which have got the better of his creed.——A *bad life* and a *good belief* are diſagreeable and troubleſome neighbours, and where they ſeparate, depend upon it, it is for no other cauſe but quietneſs ſake.

2*dly*. When a man, thus repreſented, tells you in any particular inſtance, that ſuch a thing goes *againſt* his conſcience,—always believe he means exactly the ſame thing as when he tells you ſuch a thing goes againſt his ſtomach,—a preſent want of appetite being generally the true cauſe of both.

In a word,—truſt that man in nothing—who has not a good conſcience in every thing.

And in your own caſe remember this plain diſtinction, a miſtake in which has ruined thouſands:——That your conſcience is not a law;—no,—God and reaſon made the law, and has placed Conſcience within you to determine,—not like an *Aſiatic Cadi*, according to the ebbs and flows of his own paſſions;—but like a *Britiſh judge* in this land of liberty, who makes no new law,—but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written.

THE END.